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63rd year of publication

Iceland may be tip of economic iceberg

Brett Alan Dewing

It's not often that Iceland is in the world's eye. A small, isolated, and largely contained country of only 304,000, most of their international press has been of the "strange but true" variety. All that has changed in recent months, and it hasn't been for the better.

In October, Iceland experienced the quickest economic collapse in recent history when the global credit crisis toppled its banks in a matter of weeks. The country had been on the rise in the last quarter century, becoming one of Europe's richest nations. All that changed when mountains of foreign debt put the country's three major banks in jeopardy. On October 9, the government seized them in an attempt to prevent national bankruptcy – a move that proved too late. Now limping along thanks to an 8 billion euro aid package from the International Monetary Fund, Iceland is in serious economic peril.



Protesting in Iceland

Democrat party has formed a coalition with Iceland's Left-Green Party in an interim government whose main duty will be damage control. Such party politics will

sound familiar to Canadians, although the proposed coalition government in our country was not successful in attaining power.

"The new coalition will focus

on restarting the economy and protecting the households. The new coalition will emphasize a responsible economic management and undertake many projects in a short period of time," Prime Minister Sigurdardottir promised. It remains to be seen whether or not these projects can make a dent in the country's deep economic and social crisis.

starting to heed his warnings.

Similar to Iceland, Ireland is a small country with an open

*Experts suggest
Ireland is the next
candidate for
bankruptcy.*

Who will be next?

Experts are warning that Iceland may be but the first country to crumble under the current economic tide. They have set their eyes on Ireland as the next potential candidate for bankruptcy. As early as 2006, Irish economist Morgan Kelly began sounding the alarm, but people are just now

economy and huge problems with foreign debt. Currently, every Irish child being born is said to owe US\$442,961.33 to external lenders. If Ireland follows Iceland into bankruptcy, the results could be disastrous. Ireland, unlike Iceland, uses the euro. The collapse of a euro-based economy could spell doom for

See **Iceland** on page 2

Afghan conflict reaches critical turning point (Part I)

Harold Alkema

Afghans are well acquainted with violence and war. In the last thirty years, 1.5 million citizens of that country have been killed in wars between various foreign and internal enemies. Canada became involved in the latest round of fighting in 2002 after the September 11 terrorist attacks and subsequent US-led invasion. Our country has 2,500 troops on the ground and has lost over one hundred soldiers. It is estimated that the conflict has cost taxpayers between 7 and 10 billion dollars. Given these sacrifices and serious questions about the mission at the highest levels of government, it is time to take a critical look the Afghan mission and some of the set-backs faced by coalition forces.



Taliban gaining strength

The Taliban is a resurgent force that has been building strength in the Pakistan-Afghan border regions for at least three years. In 2008, insurgent attacks were up fifty percent. The guerrillas control

much of the countryside, even up to the outskirts of Kabul, the capital. They have engaged in kidnapping, criminal activity, the construction and placement of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and suicide bombings, a tactic that was

previously reserved for Iraq. Today Afghanistan is coming to resemble Iraq more and more. Monthly casualty rates among foreign forces in Afghanistan in 2008 exceeded those in Iraq for the first time in six years.

Foreigners no longer welcome

The US-led coalition is also starting to lose the support of Afghans as the war effort slackens. Former Mujahidin warlords, some of them wanted by the UN for war crimes, have been armed, equipped and financed by the US and its allies to head up private security companies. This was a major disappointment to many who wanted to see these men and the mercenaries they command disarmed and brought to justice. Worse still, many of the ex-warlords are engaged in illegal

See **Afghanistan** on page 2

The fall of the government

This January, beset by an angry and terrified populace, Iceland's government folded as well. Prime Minister Geir Haarde announced that he and his government would step down, citing health issues as his primary impetus for leaving his post. By the end of the month, a new coalition government was in place, led by Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir.



Sigurdardottir is not only the face of a government trying to pull its country out of despair and bankruptcy, she is the first female to hold her post and the first openly gay leader in the world. Her Social

News

Afghan conflict *continued from page 1*

arms smuggling, filtering weapons to al Qaeda and the Taliban, who turn them on the legitimate elements of the Afghan National Army and police, which lost 700 personnel last year alone.

In similar fashion, foreign forces often rely on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT's) to facilitate much needed aid work in Afghanistan's rural areas. Afghans, however, are largely dissatisfied with the PRT's, which direct foreign support into large salaries and away from reconstruction. In short, locals view the PRT's as corrupt. They are also unwelcome in many villages, because they tend to travel with "big security" that attracts the violent and vengeful attentions of the Taliban. It could be argued that PRT's have discredited the rebuilding effort in the same way that private security companies, run by known war criminals, have discredited the war effort. Out of frustration, some Afghans, many who openly welcomed foreign troops as liberators in 2001, have switched allegiances and now support the Taliban, if only to help drive foreign forces out.

Losing ground

The countries currently supporting the Karzai regime are not completely incompetent, nor is it the case that the war cannot be won. It seems, rather, that the conflict in Afghanistan has reached a critical turning point. If the US-led coalition wants to end the violence and build a viable political and economic society in Afghanistan, it will have to do more to address security and reconstruction at the grassroots level. It will also have to find legitimate allies within Afghanistan, because at the moment PRT's and private security companies do not seem to have the support of most Afghans. Instead, they have damaged the war effort and the reputation of foreign forces within Afghanistan. Unless the US-led coalition does something to redress this situation, they risk losing the people of Afghanistan and perhaps



Women in traditional burqas walk through Kabul.

the country, effectively setting the clock back to 2001.

Harold Alkema has a Master's Degree in History from the University of Waterloo. He currently works as a researcher in Ottawa with a private firm specializing mainly in Native Affairs issues and historical research. Part II of this series will be printed in the next issue, April 13.

**Principles of Just War**

- It must be a last resort, after all non-violent options have been exhausted.
- It must be waged by a legitimate authority, not by individuals or groups.
- It can only be fought to redress a wrong suffered. For example, self-defence against an armed attack is always considered to be a just cause.
- It must have a reasonable chance of success.
- Its ultimate goal must be to re-establish peace. More specifically, the peace established after the war must be preferable to the peace that would have prevailed if the war had not been fought.
- Violence used in the war must be proportional to the injury suffered.
- The weapons used must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Civilians are never permissible targets of war, and every effort must be taken to avoid killing civilians.

Adapted from mtholyoke.edu/justwar

Iceland *continued from page 1*

all of Europe.

And Ireland isn't the only country in immediate trouble. In February, the European Commission launched excess deficit procedures for Ireland,



Ten Icelandic kronur, worth about 12 cents Canadian

Greece, Spain, France, Latvia and Malta. *Foreign Policy* magazine has singled out Great Britain, Greece, Latvia, Ukraine, and Nicaragua as the "next Icelands". Europe's economy has "come to a complete halt," said Robert Barrie, chief European economist at Credit Suisse Group in London.

More than an economic problem

Perhaps even more frightening than the state of the world economy is the toll it is beginning to take on society. Riots, protests, job cuts, and demonstrations are springing up all around the world as governments are forced to cut back. In Eastern Europe, where the economy was not strong to begin with and the roots of democracy are not yet deep, this unrest has caused particular alarm. Latvia's Prime Minister was replaced in February, after his coalition government fell. Lithuanian police had to break up January riots with teargas. Hundreds in Ukraine have called for the resignation of their president and compensation for money lost in bank failures. And amid all of this unrest, other countries have slowed down their aid to these and other struggling countries, afraid for their own economies. Some fear the re-emergence of hard-line, right-wing governments in these

areas that could usher in a new age of Eastern European dictatorships.

Further, many are afraid that Barack Obama's new cabinet may not be handling things well. Secretary of State Clinton has been criticized for recent meetings with Russian leaders, where she presented the Russian Foreign Minister with a "re-set" button to signal a new start. Unfortunately, the button was labeled in "overload", not "re-set" in Russian. Just a year ago, Hillary was widely quoted as saying that President Putin had no soul, and her recent gaffe may not smooth over her previous one.

Obama himself has been mis-giving. When British Prime Minister Gordon Brown met with the new President of the United States, he brought a keepsake made from the timbers of a 19th century antislavery ship, and Obama presented him with a \$40 set of American movies on DVD. These bad first impressions led the *National Review's* Mark Steyn to posit on March 7 that Obama's term in office may end with the U.S. in worse foreign relations standing than when it began. This is bad news for those countries that see America as the one able to help pull the world climate out of the pit.

And so, Iceland may indeed be the canary in the mine signaling danger and decline to the rest of the world. Let us hope that it is not too late to prevent the domino effect foretold by economists. Let us hope that Obama's daring attack on the U.S. deficit will prove to be successful. Let us hope that Iceland's historic interim government can find ways to keep their country above water and back in the world's headlines with its recovery.

Could old-fashioned creativity stimulate this crisis-battered island?**Rabeika Messina**

REYKJAVIK, Iceland (CSM)—Along Laugavegur, Reykjavik's main shopping lane, one crafts store is thriving in spite of the economic crisis. Well, not in spite of it — because of it.

Icelanders are hardly sitting idle as their country is slammed by the global financial hurricane. In cutting-edge Reykjavik, many are turning to arts and crafts, both to save money and to make it.

"Those who can't afford to buy presents are making them on their own, and those who can afford them are mostly buying handmade Icelandic items because of the import limitations," says Nalin's owner, Helga Jona.

Until lately, a clothing and gallery store called Trilogia carried little Icelandic work. But because the government has prohibited the depositing of money in foreign accounts — the only imports allowed are necessity items, such as food — the store has been forced to stop ordering merchandise from abroad.

Knitting to the rescue?

Local designers — often one-person brands — have come to the rescue.

Some craftspeople have arts and design training, while others have non-artistic day jobs and just happened to have paid attention when their grandmothers taught them how to knit those ubiquitous rose-patterned wool sweaters.

Construction activity here has dropped 80 percent following the onset of the economic



collapse in October. Architects Johann Sigurdsson and Elin Gunnlaugsdottir saw no sense in maintaining their architectural practice. So, they moved the white elephant to the basement and opened the Verslunin Herdubreid design shop in their firm's storefront.

"We're only 150,000 people here in Reykjavik, so that means each one of us has to know how to do everything," he says. "And we really think we can do anything — arts and design included. Hey, that attitude is what got us into this financial problem. And it's probably what will get us out of it."

Nothing virtual about response

Elections for a new prime minister are scheduled for May and the new caretaker government has put an emphasis on maintaining Iceland's legendary social welfare. But some retailers doubt things will improve much for a while.

"And in a sense, the financial collapse has gotten young people busy," a local merchant says. "They have realized that they can't just be on Facebook all day; that if they want to survive, they're going to have to use their creativity and start making things to sell."

News



The right decision for the wrong reason

Jenny Denhartog

About two years ago a group of Bruce County farmers, mostly full-time family farmers, gathered to discuss a proposal to allow 50-acre agricultural lots in part of the county. At that time Bruce County Council had approved amending its official plan to allow these 50-acre lots. It was seen by many as a precedent setting proposal, poised to change rural Ontario's approach to farm land planning.

Those family farmers spent several hours in discussion, looking at all the possible impacts of allowing 50-acre agricultural parcels. Potential benefits to individual farmers were certainly recognized and taken into consideration. But in the end, this group of farmers came to the unanimous decision not to support the proposal. Many concerns were voiced, all centered on the same theme: the need to prevent productive farmland from being taken out of production and the need to encourage the existence of viable family farms. Long-term productivity and Creation care for the benefit of all was viewed as more important than short-term gain for some.

At the time, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing appealed the amendment to the Ontario Municipal Board and early last year the county voted to repeal the amendment. But the issue didn't go away, as County Council hired a consultant to find out if the county could win an appeal at the Ontario Municipal Board if it were to pursue the issue.

Recently the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario hosted a Policy Committee meeting in Elmwood, where about 20 producer participants again came to the conclusion that allowing these 50-acre lots ignored the need to protect productive farm land and would fail to support viable family farms.

Since then Bruce County has, for now, decided not to pursue this further. That decision was not based on the same reasons these farmers expressed. The decision to drop the issue was based on potentially having to pay up to \$80,000 for the county to defend the proposal, with limited chance of success. While grateful for the decision, we would be more comfortable if it were based on good land use planning principles, rather than dollars and cents. From the

Christian Farmers Federation's perspective, it was the right decision, but for the wrong reason.

Jenny Denhartog is the Field Services Associate of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. CFFO is supported by 4,353 family farmers across Ontario.



Daoism as an antidote to rat race

I'm teaching my way through the major World Religions and of the ones that we study, I find Daoism among the most fascinating. Daoism began in China with a curious, legendary figure. Laozi was born out of the left armpit of his mother after gestating for 62 years. When he was delivered, he already had a flowing white beard and a magnificent depth of wisdom.

Later he became a keeper of the archives for the Chinese government while teaching eager students on the side. He lived a simple life, and sought neither fame nor fortune. In fact, he became rather weary of all the duties of civilized life, and one day he hopped on a water buffalo and headed West, towards a more pastoral life in Tibet.

Legend says that he was stopped by one of his former students who begged him to write down his teachings. Reluctantly he obliged, and Chinese literature was bequeathed one of its most frequently read poems – the *Daodejing* (formerly written as *Tao De Ching*).

Wu Wei

Only about 5,000 words long/in total, this small book sparked a large following. It invokes the *Dao*: the unnamable, unchanging first principle of all reality. This energy or "force" is what makes and upholds all things. The Daoist goal is to get life in tune with the Dao.

One of the central concepts in Daoism is *wu wei*. Sometimes translated as "do-nothingness," it more accurately means "active non-action" or action without over-action. This approach to life suggests living simply and expending minimal effort. That is to say, not forcing or straining things; not striving, striving, striving.

The central image is water. Water is soft and always takes the shape of its container. It finds the path of least resistance when it comes across obstacles and never tires. Do not assume it is weak, however, for over time, water is stronger than granite. Consider the Niagara gorge: a long, deep gouge in solid rock carved out by water.

So Daoism is a "go with the flow" religion. It is about getting in sync with the energy that surrounds you. The story is told of a butcher whose knife never went dull in 19 years because he knew how to cut through the soft and empty spaces. Like sawing wood, he knew how to cut with the grain and let the knife do the work.

A similar approach is taken when discuss-

ing leadership. The *Daodejing* says:

A leader is best when people barely know that he exists. Of a good leader, who talks little, When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, They will say, "We did this ourselves."

The Daoist seeks to be smooth and supple in all his actions. They work with the energy in the room like a Tai Chi martial artist, using their opponent's momentum rather than resisting it.

From Martha to Mary

Generally speaking, this is very different from the Western way of living. We engage the world, re-work it, direct it, and re-build it to suit our designs. Where Daoists prescribe being adaptive and minimizing effort, Westerners are intervening and optimizing effort. If the Daoist longs to leave the city for the country, modern man fears the world beyond the freeway.

There is something romantic in Daoism, which at its worst may become a form of neglect and escapism. At its best, however, the Daoist attitude can reflect a deep truth that Christians in the West easily forget: we live by grace, not works.

Christian philosopher Peter Kreeft put it this way: Daoism teaches us that "the deepest problems of all can be solved only by *receiving*, not by doing...your parishes are beehives of Martha-like activism – programs and organizations and conferences and meetings and planning and fund-raising and busy, fussy do-gooding. You are still walking down the road that produced the early Luther: the road of works-righteousness, of do-it-yourself salvation – the old Pelagian heresy in new American dress. It is leading your culture to stress, guilt, breakdown, depression, and violence...."

An unspoken Calvinist creed has been "Good, better, best, never take a rest, until your good is better and your better best." Nobody likes a lazy person. However, there is one truth that is easier for a relaxed person to accept: life is a gift.

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Editorials

Law: what is it good for?



Brett Alan Dewing

There is much furor these days over California's Proposition 8, which recently overturned that state's sanction of same-sex marriage. In other words, gay marriage is once again illegal in that most liberal of states, and many people are Not Happy.

Now, gay marriage is far too large and weighted a topic to gloss over with descriptions of the burden of democracy and the zeitgeist of the voting public. It is almost irrevocably a moral issue. One group of citizens, those who form romantic relationships with members of their own sex, asserts its right to marry and divorce as every other American does. Another group, presumably those who voted for Prop. 8, see the sanction of those civic unions as a blessing on them as sexual unions. If the question were not affected by morality, it would hardly be worth a vote. If no one had a moral objection to homosexual union, gay marriage would be an inevitable reality.

All this to say, we are talking primarily about a moral question, not a civic one. And the question that follows naturally is, does the government have the right to legislate a moral issue?

Amoral or immoral?

First of all, let me say that avoiding moral ground does not make a person or group *de facto* immoral. It simply means that they are not involved in the moral sphere of life. Just because your doctor doesn't give you reading lists, it doesn't mean that she is against education or culture. It simply means that she is a doctor, and her job is to give you prescriptions, not syllabi.

So, what is the job of the legislator? Is it merely a civic responsibility, or does it include a moral element?

Can the two be separated? These are huge questions, and being a writer qualifies me to answer them about as much as being a movie star qualifies someone for UN work. And yet, there's Angelina Jolie doing her thing in Malawi, and here I am writing about the essence of law.

Law with a capital or lowercase L?

I once argued with my brother, a highly intelligent and aware man, about the purpose of the law. He insisted that if someone were dumb enough to drive a motorcycle without a helmet, their injuries were earned and the government needn't give them a ticket besides. I countered that the very thrust of the law was to protect the common man. Therefore, it should be illegal to drive a motorcycle without the proper safety equipment.

The difference is this: I saw law as a protective measure, and he saw it as merely a social compact in place to ward off anarchy. A case can be made for the emotional or spiritual danger of gay marriage, but it is not really a case of preventing harm to the participants. And if law is a social compact, then the case is almost arbitrary and the vote of the people holds sway.

However, there is a third view that sees the law as an enforceable moral code. This is the case for many of what the press calls "fundamentalists". They (we?) try to inflate the Law as written upon our hearts with the law as written in the constitution. I, for one, am not convinced that this is a worthwhile or beneficial aim.

Learning from our mistakes

In the past, such moral-legal conflations have effectively outlawed liquor, during that infamous "noble experiment" known as Prohibition. The effects were not in large part savoury. We have also tried our hand at enforcing legal Sabbath by forbidding commerce on Sundays, another attempt that eventually failed.

The problem here is that North America, despite anyone's intentions, is not a theocracy. We are not even Christian nations, in truth. We are attempting to impose Judeo-Christian ethics on a secular people. To what end? Does legislating behaviour save souls? It does not. In reality, it can make Christianity even more distasteful to many people.

Let's return to Scripture and discover our mandate. Israel was given an endless list of moral laws, but the intent was to set them apart from the people around them. They were not called to stop the Philistines from eating pork. They were called to witness to the culture in which they lived by following their own religious Law. Moving on to the New Testament, the Law is fulfilled by Christ, and he sets about fighting for the souls of men, to the dismay of those who expected him to set up a theocratic kingdom on earth.

I myself am not suggesting that God blesses gay marriage. I am suggesting that in a society where marriage is on the decline and the Christian Church is seen as a puritanical killjoy, we may be better served to leave our moral Laws out of our civic ones and focus on being a light to our culture.

There's the silver lining I've been looking for



Angela Reitsma Bick

I've noticed four recurring words in the media to describe our economy: crisis, downturn, slump and climate. An economic crisis sounds the most dramatic, but it may get worn out the fastest, for none can survive the relentless tension of living in a state of constant crisis. I like the mechanical image of an economic downturn, as

it seems to imply in a straightforward way that down will soon be up again. If we are experiencing an economic slump, on the other hand, then all we need is a well-aimed poke by a strict task-master to straighten up again. Finally, the vague "economic climate" sounds almost pleasant, as though this is merely an unfortunate stopover on our way to an even better place.

Regardless of what we call it, changes in the economy are affecting our jobs, schools and churches. For many, the situation may seem grim enough to warrant being called a crisis, especially south of the border. That's why I've been collecting bits of good news in the press – evidence that some people have reversed habitual Complaint Mode into Seeking Silver Lining.

Even the darkest cloud

For example, some environmentalists believe that saving long-term costs will inspire more people to be energy efficient. In early February, McGuinty's Green Energy Act made it easier for businesses to add wind turbines, solar panels and bio-fuel plants to their operations. Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen says that "thousands of jobs will be created from renewable energy projects alone." A Calgary-based company called Canadian Hydro Developer Inc. reports that it will be doubling its projects over the next year, including seven wind and 12 hydroelectric plants.

The *Vancouver Sun* states that the industries of agriculture, energy, technology and engineering are "recession-proof" in Canada. Furthermore, the areas of healthcare, pharmaceuticals, government and education are gaining jobs instead of losing them.

Valerie Elliott of the British *Times* believes that having a smaller disposable income "encourages a new generation to try to save money by cooking and eating meals at home." While this may not make restaurant owners too happy, "supermarkets report a surge in demand for basic ingredients." Would you believe that onions, garlic, stock cubes and wooden spoons are being sold at record rates in England? Conversely, frozen, pre-packaged meals have seen a decline in sales of 40 per cent, according to one British grocery chain.

Renewed need for hope

Furthermore, some churches say that they've noticed an increase in attendance. The *Globe and Mail* interviewed a pastor in western Canada who said that "people tend to draw closer together and rely on each other during difficult times." Ideally, the church community can offer support and a "roadmap for stress" (see page 8 for "Rick Warren: bad times are good times for the church").

Crisis, downturn, slump or climate – if the economy is making even gloomy journalists focus on silver linings, then maybe we can do the same and add praise to each prayer of petition, for the church has a message of hope that transcends our economic _____.

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Canada

Letters

'Drive-by mission projects' (Feb. 23 editorial)

Benefits can't be measured

We have been on many so-called "short-term" mission trips, both with CRWRC and with MMI (Medical Ministry International), to many different third world countries where people are in desperate need of help. And this help is extended in "Christ's name." The surgery and medicines provided gives dramatic results and benefit the patients for life, unattainable without a team of doctors and support staff going there. To see a surgery start with prayer with the patient on the OR table praying along in their own language can be heart rending. It is wonderful to witness surgeries on cataract patients who have been blind for years, and to see their smiles when bandages come off. These missions are an opportunity to serve Christ by providing spiritual and physical health care in a world of need. They also try to establish and equip permanent medical centers and by educating local physicians to run these centers.

We, who live in a country where we are so blessed with care for every type of illness, every kind of modern equipment and care, cannot fathom how much impact this makes on the people. We work with the local Christian community and not only are the local evangelists and missionaries given a supportive boost and encouragement by us coming there, but they see the impact made on the people for years to come.

Short term high school projects leave lasting effects on the kids that go. They see, experience and interact with the poor people. Again, the benefits and impact made cannot be measured by dollars. Often it is these same kids that turn around when home to reach out and volunteer in the local communities. You can read all the books you want about the poor, but the sights, sounds and smells of the squalor leave a lasting impression.

Maria Smedes,
Grimsby, Ontario

Eco-cost of mission trips

In addition to your concerns about short term mission trips, I would suggest that organizers (and Christians in general) start getting more serious about the environmental costs of such trips. Any Google search of airplane emissions will quickly reveal the damage being done to our planet by this Christian do-gooding. It is irresponsible to ignore this issue – fiddling while Rome burns. Are we going to wait until there's not a wild animal left in creation, and no polar ice, and no healthy fresh air or clean water, before we begin to use the brains God gave us? Good stewardship of the planet demands that we pay attention to these things and make real changes.

As just one example, think of all the paper being churned out by churches and their organizations. Are weekly church bulletins essential, and if so, why don't we email them? Denomination 1 bulletin covers and other information routinely goes to waste. The CRC has a monthly magazine which ought to be sufficient for promotional matter.

Buying fair trade coffee is good, but better yet to drink local apple juice to keep local farmers alive and avoid all those truck and airplane exhaust fumes. Keeping a car for an extra two or three years makes environmental sense. Hanging clothes on the line outdoors is almost too obvious to mention, so why aren't Christians fighting for the right to do so where local by-laws forbid it?

Anne van Arragon Hutten
Kentville, Nova Scotia

Welcome delivery of hope and support

Please don't slam short-term mission trips too hard or too fast.

Sure, it's easy to send money (to those poorer countries) and stay home, but it's hard to send time, or labour. Imagine the uplifting feeling you give when you tell one of your Christian brothers or sisters in your chosen country that you are giving up one or two weeks of your vacation to work, free of charge to them, building a school, a church or homes.

My first mission trip (I've been on six or so) was through an agency called Men for Missions. One of their recruitment approaches was that some 75 per cent of long-term foreign missionaries were/are female, and those missionaries frequently found they could minister more effectively if they had a church, school or orphanage built. Thus, the birth of mission trips for groups of people who could volunteer for short stints.

You would think that a bunch of people working for only a week or so can't get much done, but at the end of every trip, as I look back over the jobsite, I am always amazed at how much has been accomplished.

As for the great cost of transportation of groups going to all corners of God's world, yes, it is a shame, but how much of that would have been spent going on "normal" vacations for people to discover and enjoy God's beautiful creation?

When a team goes on a short-term mission trip, they're not just bringing money or volunteers, they are bringing hope and support to a community that really needs these two commodities. And when the team returns, they bring information, raised awareness and renewed energy back with them.

Paul deGroot
Millgrove, Ontario

What Ayaan Hirsi Ali should know

Having read all three exposes of inherent cruelty in Islam (Feb. 23 CC) I re-read Ayaan Hirsi Ali's book *Infidel*. Again I was struck by the numerous contradictions and inconsistencies. See for yourself.

What galled me in particular was her statement that "The Dutch adopted these policies (allowing the establishing of government-supported Muslim schools) because they wanted to be good people. Their country had behaved unspeakably in Indonesia and didn't (much) resist Hitler; in Holland a greater percentage of Jews were deported during the Second World War than in any other country in Western Europe."

In respect to "unspeakable behaviour," I would refer Ayaan Hirsi Ali to pp. 9-24 of James Bradley's book *Flyboys*. She may be surprised to learn that her present host-country, the USA, behaved unspeakably in regards to the Native Americans.

Concerning her demeaning comment about the deportation of Dutch Jews, I feel it my duty to point out to her that, besides Poland, no country hid more Jews than did Holland. I would also mention that at Yad Vashem, located on Har Hazikaron, are inscribed the names of many Dutch citizens who have been declared Righteous Gentiles for their efforts in hiding Jews. Many paid for this effort with their lives.

Harry Antonides, in his article about the Geert Wilders trial, reports that "last year the UN Human Rights Council – including China, Angola, Cuba and Saudi Arabia – adopted a resolution that moved a step closer to criminalise criticism of Islam."

Although the Canadian representative protested against this resolution, Canada abstained from voting. The U.S. also abstained. Ayaan Hirsi Ali has called Saudi Arabia "the worst example of evil" and the U.S. "the leader of the free World." In this instance the leaders of the free world had an opportunity to condemn Saudi Arabia for their unspeakable violation of human rights. They weaseled out. Oil seems to trump human rights again.

Lippe C. de Haan,
Exeter, Ontario

Not a straightforward topic

Interesting article, "Drive-by mission projects." I've been on two or three myself, varying from one week to three months. Looking back, I sometimes wonder what I was thinking: Why didn't I go for longer? How much help was I really? How did I impact the community? and many more questions I have yet to fully answer. Yet, it's hard to "regret" certain things because of how it impacted the way I now see the world/life. While I think you make some excellent points and some wonderful suggestions, I think it's far more complex than we often think.

- There is a lot of interesting reading on the subject. For example,
- "The explosive growth in the number of Short Term Missions taken, both by kids and adults, hasn't resulted in similarly explosive growth in the number of career missionaries.
- It's not clear whether or not participation in STMs influences participants – once life returns to "normal" – to donate more money to alleviate poverty.
- Participating in STMs doesn't seem to reduce participants' tendencies toward materialism" (research presented in *Missiology*, 2006).

I'm glad you're challenging people to think more deeply about the subject.

Paul Dekker

Christian Courier

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News

Hymnal scholar insists on biblical faithfulness in hymns



Bert Witvoet

Etobicoke, Ont.—When Bert Polman spoke for the Southern Ontario Chapter of the Hymn Society toward the end of February, he wondered whether he was there to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth or the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's first day on earth. Both events are singled out for recognition this year, although by different groups. But since this was the hymn society who had invited Polman, he had little choice, except to focus on Calvin and the Genevan Psalms.

Some 40 people had come to the Kingsway Lambton United Church on a chilly Sunday afternoon to hear Dr. Polman, head of the music department at Calvin College, talk about "Calvin @ 500." The participants sang lots of songs, though not all of them were Genevan psalms. Polman's talk

included a presentation of how hymnal committees struggle with the challenges that go with producing new hymnals. Polman made it clear that when John Calvin proposed the Genevan Psalter in 1562, he more or less coerced the church to adopt the Psalter. Versifications were done in French, the main language in Geneva. When Genevan psalms were translated into English, the peculiar rhythms of the tunes and text did not always work that well. Consequently the English and Scottish Psalters did not include a lot of Genevan psalms. Polman admits that not all Genevan psalms are all that user-friendly, with tunes that are difficult to master for those who have to go by memory.

Strict rules

John Calvin was quite rigid when it came to congregational singing. Only versifications of the Psalms were to be sung, not

of other Scripture passages. And he did not tolerate harmonization of voices or the use of instruments. The people of God were to sing God's praises with one voice. The only non-Psalms that were tolerated were the Lord's Prayer, one of the Canticles and the Ten Commandments, all put to music. Psalm versifications were judged by how close they came to the original text, not by their lyrical excellence.

Polman showed sympathetic understanding for the fact that Calvin limited himself to the singing of Psalms: "The church needed to be kept close to the Bible at a time when heresies were rife." He also demonstrated that some very familiar and popular hymns do not always do justice to God's work of salvation. A number of hymns, for example, limit what the angels sang at the birth of Jesus to "Glory to God in the highest" or "Gloria in excelsis Deo," leaving out the second part: "and on earth peace." We misrepresent the work of God on earth if we leave out the resulting peace that emanates from the glory of God, says Polman. "It's a package deal!"

Another example of sloppy hymn writing, according to Polman, is "The First Noel." People blithely sing about shepherds seeing the same star as the wise men, when they could not possibly have done so, seeing that the angel concert and the guiding star phenomenon were at least a year apart.

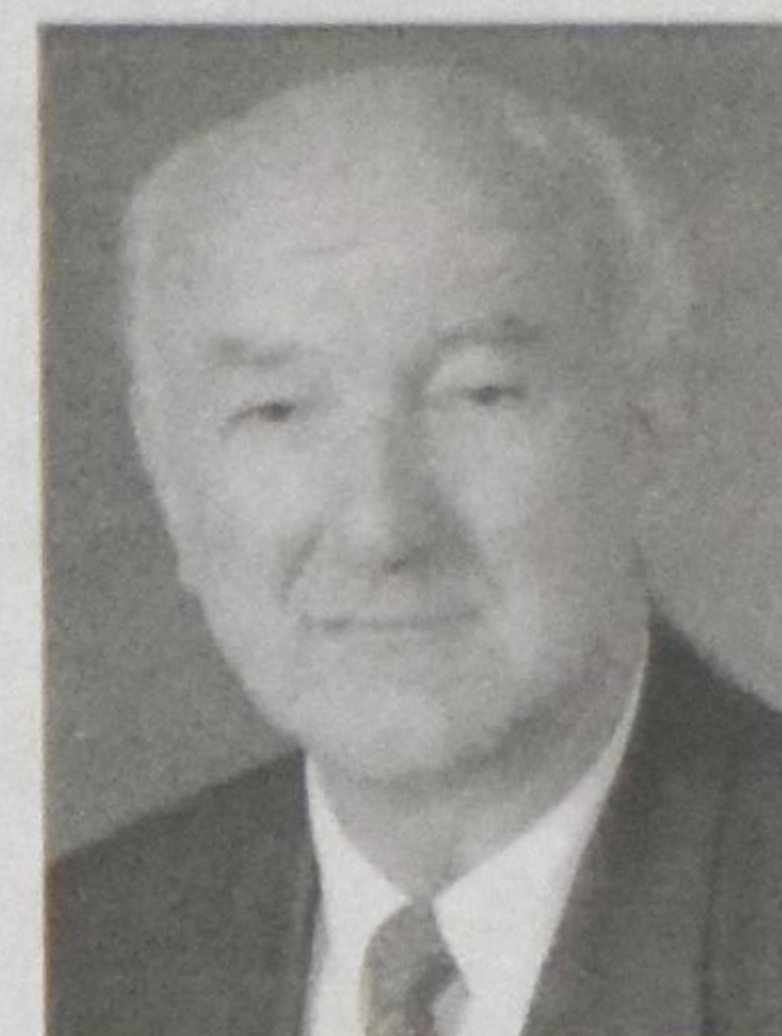
Comfort in suffering

It was interesting to hear him point out that the United Church hymnal *Voices United* still presents the hymn "Abide With Me" in a way that does injustice to the reality of suffering in our lives. "How can anyone sing: 'I fear no foe with you at hand to bless/ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness' after Dachau and Darfur?" Polman asked with passion, after he had banged the hymnal on the piano and shouted: "Stop!" to the audience, who had poured themselves into the hymn with gusto. "Ills *have* weight, and tears *have* bitterness." He referred to Psalm 23 as a more accurate way of presenting God's comfort: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." It's when ills *have* weight and tears *have* bitterness that we experience God's presence next to us, in the valley, Polman said. As a member of the Christian Reformed *Psalter Hymnal* Committee, he had been part of the decision to change the fourth verse of "Abide With Me" to "I fear no foe with you at hand to bless/though ills have weight, and tears their bitterness." That minor change of adding the word "though" in the *Psalter Hymnal* accurately represents the nature of God's comfort in the midst of suffering, he commented.

Few are chosen

Polman suggested that the hymn "In Christ Alone" (*Contemporary Songs for Worship* # 20) is one of the best hymns that have recently been published. It successfully weds a text that faithfully expresses a Pauline theology of grace with a spirited and well-crafted tune. "It's one of a dozen songs among some 250,000 contemporary praise songs that make the rounds these days that your grandchildren will still sing," said Polman. "You won't believe the amount of drivel that comes across my desk," he added.

His comments about the estimated 250,000 contemporary hymns, most of them of inferior quality, elicited the light-hearted comment from a member of the audience that Polman had managed to direct his talk to Darwin's anniversary, after all, by espousing Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest.



Bert Polman

All brain and no soul?

In the March 6, 2008 issue of *Nature* — a pre-eminent, widely read British science magazine — David Goldston asserts that researchers in genetics and neuroscience "are verging on drawing the ultimate materialist picture of human nature — humans are nothing more than proteins and electrical impulses, all machine and no ghost, to play off Descartes' formulation." Goldston suggests that such discoveries may genuinely undermine our Christian beliefs. Goldston is saying that advances in neuroscience may make terms like "soul" and "mind" unnecessary, in that the electrical and chemical activities of the brain are able to explain all human behaviour. Many Christians have held a dualist understanding of body and soul, maintaining that the body and the soul are separate elements. The soul, we say, is a special gift to us from God that distinguishes us from the animals. When we die, our bodies are buried (or burned), and our souls go to heaven to be with God. Jesus' request to his Father on the cross seems to support such a view (Luke 23: 46). Advances in neuroscience, in contrast, suggest that our physical body, and in particular our brain, seems a perfectly sufficient explanation for all our behaviour: a separate soul is not needed. Is this a major insurmountable problem for Christians? Goldston seems to suggest that for Christians the separate existence of the soul seems to be an important thread of their theology. But is this true?

A more positive view

I would like to take a more positive view and suggest that what scientists are discovering about human nature fits very well with the Reformed understanding of God and Scripture. Advances in genetics, neuroscience, and psychology will clearly influence our understanding of our faith and worldview, but as the two revelations of God talk to each other, they are sometimes surprisingly consistent.

Scripture often speaks of the human heart, but we all understand that it is not referring to the blood-pumping organ in our chest. Rather, Scripture writers recognize that without a heart we would die and thus use the term to describe a person's deep and central desires, the overarching motivation and direction in one's life. We speak of love and matters of the heart in our discussions.

In much the same way, it may be possible to think of the soul as a shorthand way of describing the essence of who a person is.

Think about music. Once music was available only when performed by musicians. In the past several decades, it became possible first to hear music on vinyl records, then in digital form on compact discs, and now as MP3 files downloadable from the Internet. The format has changed radically, but the music remains the same: you recognize Beethoven's Ninth Symphony whether it's played from a stage, a turntable, or a computer.

Of souls and wetware

It may be possible to think of what a person is and have a way of summarizing their essence in a somewhat similar manner. The normal way we exist is in what scientists call "wetware," a complex, biochemical organ we call the body and brain. It is conceptually possible that this "wetware" can be analyzed and saved in an alternate digital format. It would be a large data set, and it would change continuously as we live, but in principle it would be a different format for the same information. Perhaps one way to talk about this "wetware," this information that would need to be saved, is to name it our soul.

Rather than think about "the soul" as a separate part of who I am, "the soul" becomes a shorthand way of describing what makes me who I am. After I die, God can preserve my essence, my soul, in a different format, just as an accurate digital recording of a live music performance can be revisited at any future time or place. When we understand the soul in this way, it is unnecessary to suggest that the spirit is something in addition to and separate from the body. Advances in neuroscience which suggest that the soul is really a series of actions of the brain using its proteins and electrical impulses do not, to me, create any insurmountable problems for my faith. Such findings may require rethinking about our theology, but they need not undermine the truth of Scripture. While Goldston is right to raise these questions in his *Nature* column, I would suggest that the dialogue between science and religion about these matters will prove profitable to both and fatal for neither.



From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom

News

Jubilee: He brought me to his banqueting table

Katrina VandenBerg

Imagine you have received an unexpected invitation to a dinner. You show up to this dinner only to discover a table laden with fresh vegetables, various breads, a savoury selection of meats, and delectable desserts served with a cup of freshly ground coffee. You soon realise that this is not a dinner, it is a feast.

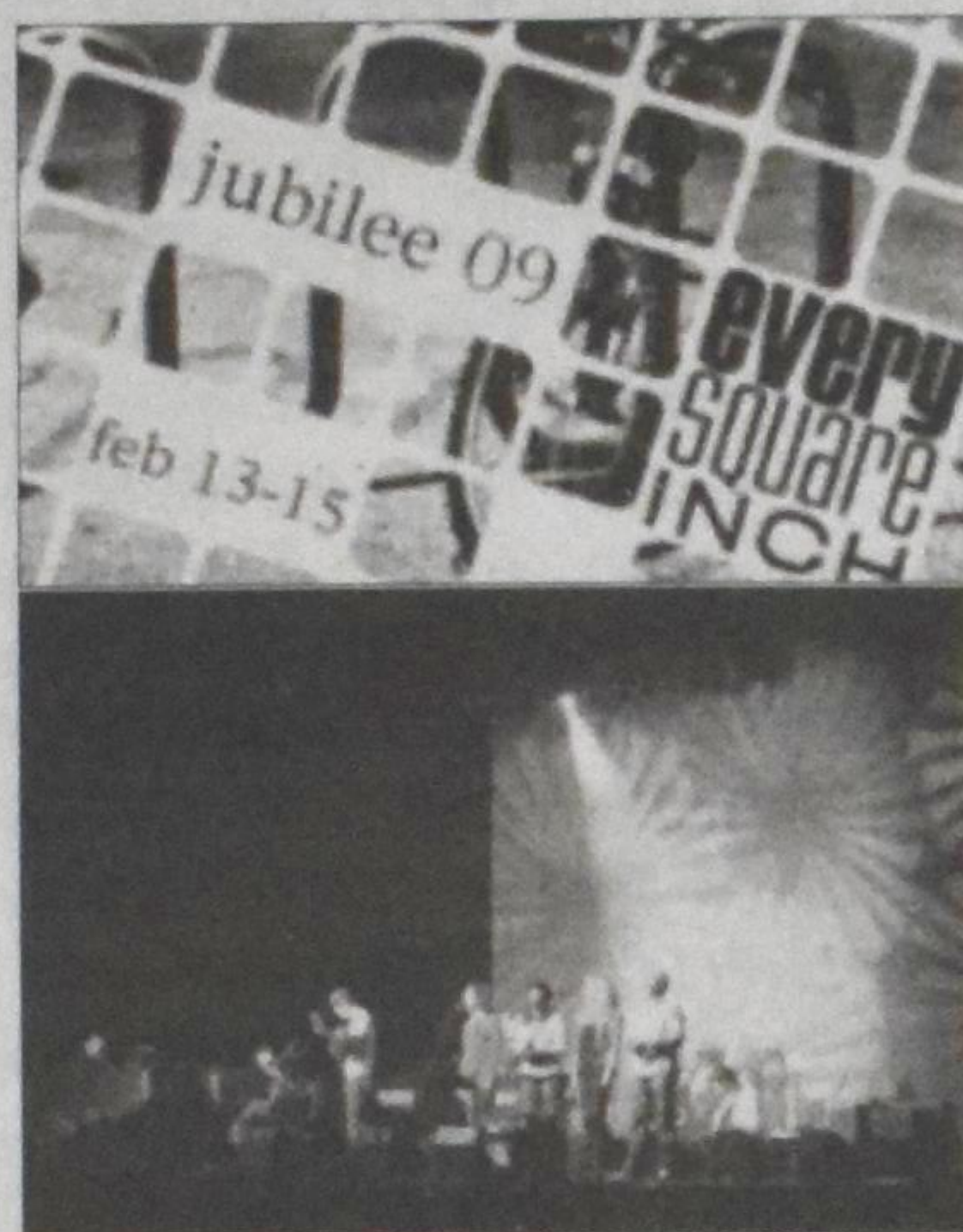
This is a taste of the Jubilee 2009 experience.

The weekend of February 14th I was given the opportunity to attend the Jubilee Conference in Pittsburgh, PA. This year's theme, *Every Square Inch*, served as a challenge and a call for the Christian life of service. God cares for every square inch of his creation, which includes the colleges and universities, and thus our future and present vocations. Although Jubilee is geared especially for University students, it is open for anyone who questions what it looks like to be faithful to Christ in today's culture and to foster hope in our broken world; it is for anyone who is not content to settle for easy answers to tough questions.

Re-imagining the role of faith

The worship, the music, the speakers, and the sessions were all testaments to Jubilee bringing many imaginative faithful people to one place. Around every corner was the possibility of conversation, insight, and opportunity; it did not imitate our culture. Today, Christians are surrounded with expectations in order to help us climb the ladder of success, which makes it far too easy for Christians to rely on their own strength instead of their Lord. Jubilee was a reminder that the kingdom that Christians belong to offers more than just success. Instead it provides the ability to see problems as opportunities, the space to wonder, and a place for service.

At one session in particular, "Re-imagining Life After University," Tom and Christine Sine presented the reality that in order to make a difference in our world, Christians must re-imagine how their faith should form the way that they study, play, work, and live. Hope is presented when Christians faithfully take up the call to practice spirituality. Christine Sine shares the wonder of this call, for "spiritual



practice is anything that connects us more intimately to God and to God's world. It is not so much something we do but rather the spirit which we do it.... 'May your kingdom come,' we pray each time we pray the Lord's Prayer, yet most of us do not take that seriously. What would happen in your life and mine, in your community and mine if we really took this prayer seriously for all of life?"

Unselfish simplicity

Jubilee not only encourages you to re-imagine the walk of faith, but it provides the resources to do so. One session in particular, led by Bill Strickland, left many encouraged with possibilities. He shared his experiences of founding the Manchester Craftsman's Guild, which is a multi-discipline, minority directed, centre for arts and learning that employs the visual and performing arts to foster a sense of accomplishment and hope in the urban community. He eliminated the concept that opportunity is limited for the privileged. It soon became evident that Bill Strickland does nothing in small doses, for the institution he helped build imitates an abundant lifestyle. The tables were made from solid wood, live plants lined the halls, and the corridors were lit with sunlight streaming in through grand windows.

At first I was sceptical of the excess, but as he spoke I soon realised that this abundance stems from his simple desire to serve God and his community. This unselfish simplicity is what makes it possible for Christians to live an exuberant life. Strickland exemplified the blessings that come from the desire to sacrifice what the world deems as important and instead dwell in the possibilities of service.

The Jubilee Conference was not only an encouragement to live faithfully, it exemplified how living on purpose makes a difference in our world, in our communities, and in our neighbourhoods. Take this as an unexpected invitation to attend Jubilee 2010; in the words of my friend, Larry Bourgeois, "embrace the table, him, and the feast."

Katrina VandenBerg grew up on a farm in the small town of Winchester, but has become quite fond of the city of Hamilton. She is currently a fourth year English student at Redeemer, and a member of New City Church, PCA – a church plant in Hamilton. Her favourite past-times are sharing in conversation over tea, sitting in comfy chairs while getting lost in a novel, or playing in parks.



Gardens: A Literary Companion

If you prefer tending plants to mending line, *Gardens: A Literary Companion* may be just the book for you. Technical writing about gardening, like technical writing about fly-fishing, can get to be an exercise in bandying about Latin names. There are shelves full of how-to books about gardening: everything from square-foot gardening (it never became popular in the metric version) to endless recipes for compost; better ways of outwitting borers, beetles, and other bugs to endless varieties of pansies, petunias or peonies; the advantages of roto-tilling, or not; spading or double-digging; irrigation systems that cost you the price of a year's vegetables or how to use grey-water with blanching (the vegetables still need to be blanched before freezing, however).

But there is another side to gardening: the more meditative, the literary, the spiritual. Adam and Eve were gardeners before they discovered nakedness and slaughter. They met God in the cool of the evening... in the garden, not the duck blind or bass boat, you might say.

Stories of delight

Contributors to this volume remind us that gardeners have been great adventurers, traveling worldwide to find new specimen plants for propagation. Several writers remind us that working with soil is deeply satisfying. Pliny the Elder (from Roman times) writes about soil that "is best of all the other, which hath an aromaticall smell and tast with it [sic]." Another writer has forgotten the flowers and vegetables she grew but remembers the earth: "I can feel it warm and rich in my hands like soft bread crumbs. It was dark, deep brown, not black, and it smelled good. Over the years I have kept trying to find it again."

The delight of finding flowers ("real flowers," weeds, and other introduced species) blooming during the bombing Blitz of London in 1944 shows how even

destruction cannot escape inexorable beauty of a sort. Only a few articles describe gardening in terms of an apocalyptic battle against sumac or nettles. Most mention delight more than despair. Germaine Greer supplies a humorous article about revolting plants; Jennifer Bennett (former *Harrowsmith* editor) offers a meditative piece "On the Rootedness of Plants"; Sharman Apt Russell writes about plant sex; and other articles are contributions about the gardens of famous artists.

Two of my favourites are uniquely Canadian contributions. "A Few Hints on Gardening" by Catharine Parr Traill describes gardening in Canada in the mid-nineteenth century. ("Canada" here means "Upper Canada"/Ontario: some things never change.) The author provides advice about using native plants, planting dates, and storing produce. She reminds us that gardening offers the opportunity for sharing "opportunities cast in your way by God himself..."

Finally, Patrick Lane's essay, "Patience and Grace" reminds us in a few short pages that winter days can be times of immense significance and satisfaction: "Grace, patience, beauty, what else has come to mind on these January days? That seems enough for now."

I read to learn, to enjoy, to experience. And through books such as these, I experience hope, learn patience, and sometimes encounter real grace, vicariously.



Gardens: A Literary Companion. Marilyn Simonds, ed. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2008. ISBN 978-1-55365-327-1

Curt Gesch (curtgesch@hotmail.com) teaches at Houston Christian School and lives in the small village of Quick, 29 kilometres southeast of Smithers B.C.



Church

Rick Warren: Bad times are good times for the church

LAKE FOREST, Calif. (Christian Post) — Though few economists expect the current economic downturn to become the sequel to America's Great Depression of the last century, today's recession is already longer than all but two of the downturns since World War II, according to an economic research bureau.

Many pro-lifers are also worried because U.S. President Barack Obama is on track to becoming the most pro-abortion president the U.S. has had. He has repealed the "Mexico City Policy," which prohibited funding for overseas abortion providers, has announced plans to lift restrictions on taxpayer-funded research using embryonic stem cells and has promised Planned Parenthood he will sign the "Freedom of Choice Act," which would abolish all restrictions and limitations on abortions at any point during a pregnancy, or even after the point of "fetal viability" if the life of the mother were considered endangered.

While most people feel helpless in the face of the economic tide, there is much Christians can do to change the cultural tide, says Rick Warren, senior pastor of Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, California. Real change doesn't come from politicians and the changing of laws but from the Church and the changing of hearts, he reminded

an audience of church leaders recently.

"Everything else is going to burn up one day. Politics isn't going to last. If I thought it was, I might be a politician," Warren quipped. "Politics is always downstream from culture. If you want to influence culture, you have to change hearts. And, you can't change a heart with a law," he added.

'How do I get connected?'

While politicians and political groups are an integral part of societies and may be working to get nations back on track financially and even morally, Warren emphasized the impact that pastors and lay Christians can have on their nation.

"One church, you drop a pebble in a pond and it doesn't make much of a ripple. But, if you take 1,000 or 10,000 or 100,000 churches and drop them, guess what? You're going to get a big reaction," he said. "Each of us doing our part we can see a major spiritual awakening in our nation and in our world if we would be available to God."



Even in the face of a recession or amid what many pro-life groups are seeing as an "assault on life" from the nation's capital, Warren reminded believers of the hands that God has given them to reach out.

Laws passed to make abortions easier to obtain do not have to lead to an increase in abortions if expectant mothers are informed and supported, Warren contends. And today's recession doesn't have to lead to depression. It could lead to revival if believers make themselves available to God. "We could see this recession turn into the greatest spiritual revival in our lifetime if we understand it," Warren said.

"Bad times are actually good times for the church," he continued. "People turn to Christ in a crisis. People are most open to the Gospel when they're in transition or under tension. Those are the two times that people are most open to Christ — when they are in transition and things are changing rapidly."

Last year, nearly 2.6 million people in the U.S. lost their jobs. Last month, more than 650,000 lost their jobs — the first time job losses topped 600,000 for a third month in a row in government record-keeping dating to 1939. According to The Associated Press, some 12.5 million people are searching for work — more than the population of the entire state

of Pennsylvania. Proportionately, the numbers in Canada were not rosy either.

"The unemployment by the middle of next year will likely be the highest it's ever been since the Depression," noted Warren. "I'm not saying this for doom and gloom; this is our opportunity," he continued. "When people are hurting, they turn to the Lord. And, in a crisis, they start asking, how do I get connected? Nobody wants to go through a storm by themselves."

So while his nation, and countries worldwide, may be facing moral and economic crises, the southern California pastor urged church leaders to rally believers to reach out to those who are hurting. He reiterated, "People don't turn to Christ when things are going good. They turn to Christ when their mortgages are upside down, and they get laid off and things are getting tight. Read the book of Judges. Seven times. Every time Israel got profitable, they forgot God. God would allow a crisis to come in, and lay them low, and in that low, they turned back to God."

Warren predicted, "People are going to be more open, more receptive to the Good News in the next year and a half than in any other time in our lifetime. And, if we miss this, we have missed an incredible spiritual harvest."

Employees help CRC slice \$2.5 million from budget

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) — The board of trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America has approved a series of financial measures, including cuts in compensation for denominational employees, geared toward helping the church to weather the current financial crisis.

Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the CRC, met with staff at the denomination's U.S. office in Grand Rapids, Mich., to outline the measures passed late last month by the board, which was meeting in Burlington, Ontario.

Dykstra had told staff about the proposed cost-saving measures about a month ago, prior to the proposal going to the board of trustees.

Faced with the need to make about \$2.5 million in cuts for the fiscal year that ends in June, the denominational trustees agreed to require CRC employees in both the U.S. and Canada to increase their own contribution for employer-provided health insurance.

In addition, the CRC will reduce the amount it pays toward employee pensions. Ordained employees who are part of the ministers' pension plan will take a four per cent cut in pay in lieu of a pension reduction.

Agency cuts too

There have also been \$2 million in cuts to other budget areas. Each agency reviewed its budget in order to find ways to cut costs.

Looking ahead, Dykstra said that next

year will also require belt tightening unless the economy turns around.

"It is not going to be easy to do what God has called us to do," Dykstra said. "The biggest issue is finances. This was a very real concern for the board of trustees." But, he said, while the board spent significant time discussing financial matters, "there was very little pessimism."

So far this year, contributions to the CRC's Ministry Shares collected from each CRC congregation (formerly called "quotas") have been below what was budgeted, though still fairly steady. The Ministry Shares help fund a range of denominational ministries. However, income from investments and donors is down. "Our ministries are feeling the pinch," said Dykstra.

Still, he told of one donor who recently gave \$750,000 toward a leadership project. "This is a donor who supports a CRC ministry with this donation, but at the same time this person won't reduce overall commitment to the church," said Dykstra.

In another cost saving measure, the board of trustees will ask Synod 2009 to move Synod 2010, which was to be held in Edmonton, Alberta, back to Grand Rapids, where it is usually held. This would reduce organizational costs and airfare for delegates who are chosen to attend the annual general assembly.

S. African theologian turns down nomination for top party post

Munyaradzi Makoni

Cape Town, South Africa (ENI) — Professor Russel Botman, the rector of Stellenbosch University, has declined to stand as a candidate in South Africa's forthcoming elections for a party that has broken away from the country's ruling African National Congress.

Botman, a theologian and a former president of the South African Council of Churches, had been proposed by the Congress of the People (COPE) as its candidate for the premiership of South Africa's Western Cape province in the 22 April national and provincial elections.

However, in a statement posted on his university's Web site on 24 February, Botman said, "I would like to inform you that I have notified the COPE leadership that I have decided to decline the offer. My current position at Stellenbosch University is a challenging one."

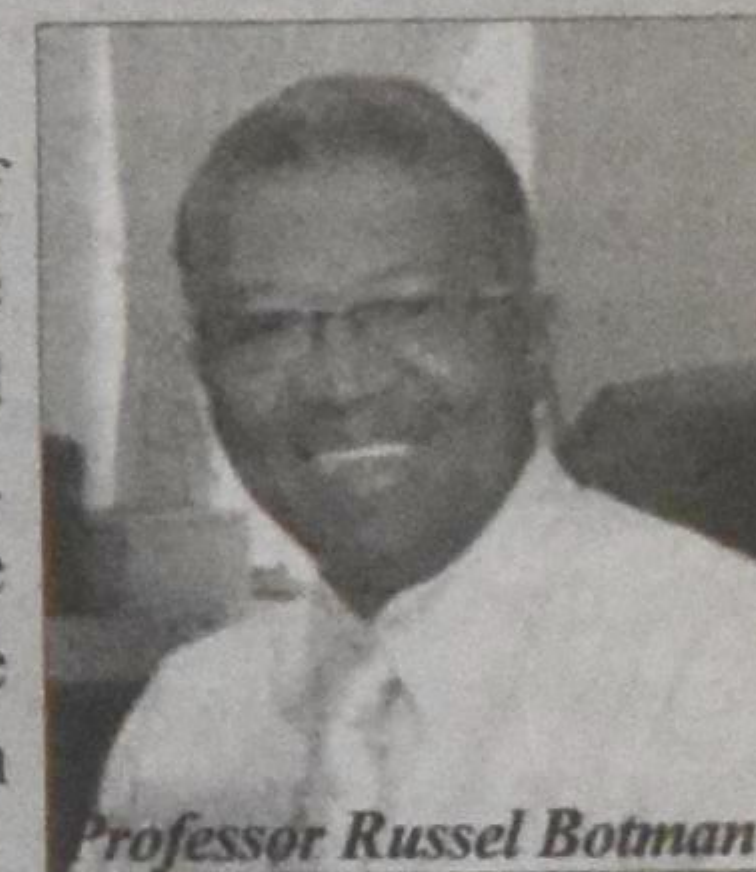
The COPE party was formed in December 2008 after Thabo Mbeki was made to step down as South Africa's president three months earlier. It announced on February 20 that its candidate for president would be the Rev. Mvume Dandala, a former Methodist leader who stepped down at the end of 2008 as general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches. Some South African media speculated that Botman's decision paves the way for the

past president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Rev. Allan Boesak, to be COPE's candidate for the top post in the Western Cape.

Boesak was reported to have been a runner up to Botman in the nomination for the post.

Following the nomination of Botman, who comes from the Reformed tradition, and Dandala, who is also a former president of the South African Council of Churches, the SACC said it, "holds no bat for any political party, including the party which our two former leaders may join". In a statement, SACC president Tinyiko Maluleke said, "We believe it is the prerogative of all South Africans and all South African Christians, to choose the political party of their choice without being led by the SACC or any church leader to do so."

The SACC was prominent in the struggle against apartheid and at one time some people would say, "The SACC is the ANC at prayer." Another prominent South African church figure to head the SACC was Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town.



Professor Russel Botman

Church

Mennonites look towards global summer gathering

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay (Ekklesia) – By late last month 1,500 international registrations had been processed for the 15th global assembly of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) to be held in Paraguay this summer.

“Paraguayans have extended the invitation to come in 2009, enthusiasm is high there and visitors will be welcomed,” said a spokesperson. The Assembly will run from July 14 to 19, in Asunción, the national capital.

There are 1.6 million Mennonite and Mennonite-associated Christians throughout the world. They are heirs to the part of the Reformation tradition which emphasizes peacemaking and social witness, voluntary “believers’ baptism,” the following of Jesus in everyday life, and a form of church life and practice distinct from the state.

Approximately 6,000 people registered for Assembly 14 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Organizers hope for similar or greater numbers for Assembly 15 in Paraguay.

Paraguay 2009 registration fees were struck more than one year ago, before the economic crisis sent the Euro, Canadian dollar, and Paraguayan Guaraní into a downward spiral, reducing the value of registrations paid in those currencies. Higher registration numbers will help compensate for those losses, organizers hope.

Helping the cash-strapped

To ease the financial burden of the cash-strapped, MWC officials have waived the late registration fee. Registrants who have already paid the late fee may choose to redirect the fee as a contribution to the Travel Fund or to have the fee credited toward their final billing.

Registrations from Canada, now at about 500, and Europe, slightly less than 300, are strong, which is no surprise given the many family connections and migrations to and from Paraguay. At the same time, registrations from the U.S. stand at about 535 (or 75 per cent of projections) but can still reach anticipated numbers and beyond between now and July. Germany has also passed the 100 mark; the Netherlands and Switzerland are well beyond 50 registrants with France just shy of that number.

Registrations from Africa are ahead of projections, but “the painful reality,” says Ray Brubacher, international coordinator for Paraguay 2009, “is that many of these registrants will need travel subsidies to make the trip.” All registrants are being invited to make a contribution to an international Travel Fund to assist those in lower income countries to attend Paraguay 2009.

Mennonite World Conference describes itself as “a communion (*Koinonia*) of Anabaptist-related churches linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith aiming to create fellowship, worship, service and witness.”



Ash Wednesday service shared by young evangelicals, Catholic bishop

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (CNA) – Belmont University, an evangelical school in Nashville, holds an Ash Wednesday service every year and it is better attended every year. What’s more, this year the preacher was the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nashville, David Choby. Choby was joined in leading the service by Todd Lake, Belmont University’s vice-president of spiritual development.

Belmont describes itself as “a Christian community.” Its website says, “The university faculty, administration and staff uphold Jesus as the Christ and as the measure of all things. Students encounter Christian values relevant to personal growth and spiritual maturity and are expected to commit themselves to high moral standards.”

Nothing there for a Catholic bishop to argue with. But in his Ash Wednesday sermon, Bishop Choby talked about symbols. He told his mostly Protestant audience that we human beings need physical reminders of spiritual truths. Thus, the customs of Ash Wednesday become powerful. Choby told, too, of his own custom of making the sign of the cross on his forehead, lips and heart before reading from the Bible. “I do that as a sign the love of Christ will be in my mind, that the love of Christ will be on my lips, and that the love of Christ will transform my heart,” he said.

Attendance at such services reflects a trend towards liturgical interests among younger evangelicals, says Todd Johnson, professor of worship at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He told *The Tennessean* that such interest is increasingly common. “We have a whole generation of people who are familiar with using symbols. Kids have grown up using icons on their computers. Symbols mean more to them than words.”

Ash Wednesday also became more commonly observed after 9/11, Johnson said. “It’s a reminder of your baptism, and time to examine your life,” he said. “The ashes ... are a sign of our mortality.” Ashes are placed on each worshiper’s forehead with the words of Gen. 3:17, reiterated in Job 34:14, Psalm 104:29 and Eccles. 3:20: “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Italian Catholics give up ‘texting’ for Lent



ROME (CNA) – After beginning in just three Italian Catholic dioceses, a campaign to give up text messages, social networking sites and computer games has spread throughout Italy.

The dioceses of Modena, Bari and Pesaro began the “Stop texting for Lent” campaign, the *Times of London* reported. The effort acknowledges the truth of comments made earlier this year by Pope Benedict XVI when he talked of the “isolating effects of technology.”

In a January message for the 43rd World Day of Social Communications, the Pope praised young people’s ability to link new media with their desire to be connected to others. He

said this technology is turned to “as means of communicating with existing friends, of meeting new friends, of forming communities and networks, of seeking information and news, and of sharing their ideas and opinions.”

By seeking out others, Benedict added, “we are fulfilling our deepest need and becoming more fully human. Loving is, in fact, what we are designed for by our Creator.”

However, there can be dangers involved. The Pope warned against an “obsessive” desire for “virtual connectedness” which isolates individuals from real social interaction and disrupts “patterns of rest, silence and reflection that are necessary for healthy human development.”

The disruptive pervasiveness of new communications has even reached into the Vatican. President Sarkozy of France was criticized for his bad manners in checking his mobile phone for text messages during a personal audience with Pope Benedict. Some observers quipped that France should also have adopted the “Stop texting for Lent” campaign.

Methodist radio Lenten series: Act against poverty

LONDON (Ekklesia) – The Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF) has teamed up with Premier Christian Radio in the United Kingdom to challenge listeners and Internet users to take simple actions that will change the world and confront global poverty during this Lenten period.

As high food prices threaten to push 100 million people deeper into poverty and the world economic crisis persists, the radio series reminds people that they can make a difference to those living in the world’s poorest communities.

The series, comprising six internet programs and exclusive interviews on Premier’s “Sunday Breakfast,” is based on MRDF’s study pack, “What Does the Bible Say About Changing the World?”

The series focuses on biblical characters and on people from MRDF’s overseas work who have made an extraordinary difference. It will also give listeners ideas of



simple actions they can take to empower some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

Nurturing selflessness

The President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Stephen Poxon, recorded the biblical reflections for the series. Says Poxon, “I am thrilled to be a part of Premier’s Lent

series and to champion the work of MRDF. I recently visited its project for street children in Bangladesh, where I saw love in action as vulnerable youngsters were cared for by

people who could have been doing less risky work. Through my reflections, I hope to encourage us to nurture this kind of selflessness in our everyday lives.”

Peter Kerridge, Premier’s chief executive, says the programs are important because they don’t just call attention to the global poverty, “they offer listeners ways to respond to the issues and make a real change through the Methodist Relief and Development Fund.”

MRDF director Kirsty Smith adds, “We are delighted to have this opportunity to tell [these] stories and to reflect on biblical principles that inspire us all to use what we have to change the world.”

The internet programs can be downloaded from <www.premier.org.uk/lent>. Live interviews with people who have seen MRDF’s work first-hand will feature on Premier’s “Sunday Breakfast” between 8-10 a.m. (GMT) until April 12.

Memoirs

Stories of Occupation and Resistance (v)

As experienced by Machiel Edelman (codename Dolf) and narrated by his daughter Dineke Poelman.

Ten Jewish prisoners

After he was rescued from the hospital in mid June 1944, Dolf's name was so high on the German list of Wanted Persons that he could not remain long in any one place. In July he lived in Bussum, and from August 1944 on in Driebergen, where he stayed with the Wijkhuizen's, a widow with two daughters, a son, and a Jewish girl in hiding (onderduiker). There was a reasonably secure hiding place in the house where Dolf and the Jewish girl were able to hide during razzias (raids).

On January 17, 1945 at 6:00 a.m. the doorbell rang repeatedly. No one paid any attention. Dolf was the only one to awaken, but as a person-in-hiding it was impossible for him to open the door, so he woke one of the daughters. At the door was a desperate man, a man who repeatedly asked for Dolf. The man was so agitated that Dolf decided to find out what was going on.

The Jewish man (Mr. Stein) told them that his wife and two sons, ten and fourteen years old, together with seven more Jewish people, had been arrested and taken away by the Germans the previous night. He promised everything he owned to Dolf if he would try to liberate them. Dolf declined the reward but promised the man to investigate.



The bookstore on the Bodegraven picture is the home of Dolf's fiancé in mid-June of 1944.

Zeist

The ten were imprisoned at the police station in Zeist. They were on the first floor behind reinforced windows and bars, making an armed attack virtually impossible. Dolf first attempted to find out whether rescue or escape could be accomplished through a number of regular channels. Receiving no cooperation, he contacted two members of the special resistance force, the KP, in Zeist.

They met, together with a student-in-hiding who excelled in drawing. During the meeting someone suggested asking the help of a German deserter who was also in hiding and who was dating a girl from Soest. This soldier obviously could speak flawless German and also still owned his SD uniform. He was not the shouting type, but could be taught, they thought.

The German, Pietje, was willing to participate and, as reward was promised that he would not become a prisoner-of-war when the war was over.

Next, a scheme had to be devised. In addition to Pietje, three more men were needed – men who did not live in the neighbourhood and therefore could not be identified. These men had to have uniforms – German uniforms and uniforms of the Dutch state police. As well, a German army truck would be required and the necessary German forms.

Everyone was assigned a task. The student prepared a

written "Befehl" (order) for transportation of prisoners to Westerbork. He also drew a very precise copy of the SD stamp.

One of the KP men made sure that a window of one of the German transport trucks parked in the garage was broken, so that the vehicle would have to be taken in for repair to a friendly repair shop from which they could "borrow" it for a little while.

Dolf knew a farmer who housed some German military deserters. These fellows were not willing to participate themselves but did allow their uniforms to be used. Two policemen who were hiding in Driebergen took part as well, using their own uniforms.

They learned that the Jews were being transported on January 23, so they had to hurry.

All in all, it still took almost a week before everything was ready.

The plan in action

On January 23 at 6 a.m. a German army truck with four people stopped in front of the police station in Zeist. The German, Pietje, was in charge. He had been told to act like a bully. After handing over the "Befehl", the four men rushed inside. With much cursing, yelling and stamping of feet, they took the prisoners from their cells, down the stairs and into the army truck.

Before the prisoners realized what was going on, they were in a transport truck going in the direction of Arnhem. At first no one talked, but after they had travelled a considerable distance, the prisoners were told they were free.

One of the prisoners remarked that he thought it somewhat strange that one of the "German" soldiers repeatedly called out "aufschieszen, aufschieszen" when it should have been the German words "vort machen, vort machen."

The group was then split into smaller groups which later reassembled in the Christian Reformed church of Driebergen. There they could remain until a hiding place was found for them.

Dolf accompanied a young couple, David and Judith Heijmans. It was not easy to find a hiding place during the Hunger Winter of 1944, but Dolf was able to find a place for them with friends of his (Jan and Bob Wagenaar). They stayed there under false names (Wim and Annie Hegemans) until after the liberation.

All ten Jews survived the war.

The Heijmans after the war

After the war, in 1949, David and Judith emigrated to Israel. By then they had two sons, one of which was named after Dolf. They also planted a tree in his memory in the Joop Westerweel-

woud in Israel.

The Wagenaars, the underground "parents" of David and Judith, were able to visit them in Israel in 1963 through a dream trip vacation offered by the Dutch magazine *Libelle*.

The young Dolf Heijmans took part in the six-day war of 1967, and nine years later (July 4, 1976) was the pilot of the airplane during the Raid on Entebbe, in which the Israeli Air Force freed 105 hostages. His brother Ido piloted the plane that fueled the motherplane in the air.

Since the 1990s Judith vacationed regularly in The Netherlands and always stayed with Bob Wagenaar. Both women were widows by then. During these vacation trips Dolf talked regularly with her, and every Christmas since then he has received a crate of Jaffa oranges from Israel.



Machiel with his son.



This certificate is awarded to

Machiel Edelman

as a token of gratitude for and appreciation of the help given to the Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen of the British Commonwealth of Nations, which enabled them to escape from, or evade capture by the enemy.

A. J. J. J.

Air Chief Marshal,
Deputy Supreme Commander,
Allied Expeditionary Force

1939-1945

Opinions

WHO says so?

The book of James 2:1-3 NLT reads, "My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim that you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favour some people more than others? For instance, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in shabby clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, 'You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor' – well, doesn't this discrimination show that you are guided by wrong motives?"

After reading this scripture I was surprised by the melody resounding in my chest:

*Jesus loves the little children
all the children of the world
red and yellow, black and white
they are precious in his sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world.*

For many, the message in this children's chorus is about acceptance, regardless of one's outward appearance or looks. It is a child-like reminder that God in his creativity and infinite love for us sees no difference that makes one person superior and another inferior. In fact, the lyrics suggest that the common human factor (as born sinners) is the only attribute that differentiates, separates or sets us apart from God. So what does someone coming into your meeting with fancy clothes and another in shabby attire have to do with the song lyrics: "red, and yellow, black and white?" My thought is, where Christ and his church is concerned, perhaps more than we think.



The marriage covenant

(for Erin Goheen and Mark Glanville)

*"You are free to be a man," she says,
all mother-wings and lover-eyes
and fawn-footed fancy.
She drops like a pearl into scented
wine,
and I drink despite my fear.*

*"Bleed," she says, and I do,
all sap and syrup and saffron honey
and tears that tear like taffy.
It is not my freedom that dies here
but my carefree care of self.*

*"You are free," she says, dropping petals
as I stand at the crook of the door.
I enter her garden, dripping with dew.
"I have heard you call," I say,
"and answer."*

Brett Alan Dewing

A brave look at our looking

Suppose, the different colours (in the song) represented sin and the various ways sin is expressed, dressed, practiced, or worn. The question I ask myself is, how automatic is it for me to measure another person by their sin and colour-code it? Do I ever find myself rating sin on a scale that ranges from small to large? Does the degree to which I regard a particular sin darken or colour my view of the person into whose eyes I am looking? And if I practice this, is my favoring one person over another something God takes seriously? Do I even see this behaviour as sinful or worth praying about? Or has judging someone's struggle with sin because it looks different or doesn't wear itself like mine become savoury to me, palatable or delicious?

Like many, it is often easier and more comfortable for me to see and deem another person's faults, especially when different from my own, as worse. When in fact the most important colour to reflect on in light of any sin is red, literally! Perhaps we can refuse a tendency to favor or think ourselves higher than others by remembering the blood that was shed for our own sin. How else can we sincerely love others well in the face of their sin and supportively walk with them in their healing journey? Instead of looking or comparing myself to others, I am ever learning to stop and put on Christ, so that I may truly see another the way Jesus does and desires me to. It is why scripture says, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness," meaning every sin, no matter the size, shape or texture.

The same grace which God has extended so that we could

come into a position of holy birthright – making us heirs and joint heirs together with him where we sit in heavenly places – is the same grace we will require to embrace and rightly love each other, clashing colour scheme aside. So whether the sin is see-through baby blue or over-the-top orange; it is only by the shed blood of Christ that our once shabby appearance is now a garment, whiter than snow. It is nothing we have done, lest we boast, because it is a gift from God. If he who has begun a good work in me is faithful to complete it, why not in another?

I don't know about you, but I need to practise wearing my custom-fit robe of righteousness more securely so that others see Christ's design. In response to the title question, WHO says so, the answer of course is, Jesus does. The question remaining is, do you? ...Let the redeemed of the Lord, say so!

Paula Warkentin works as a Teacher's Assistant with students who have special needs. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in Psychology and Women's Studies. Paula began writing poetry at the age of nine and has been writing ever since. She is passionate about spoken word, has a heart for the outcasts and particularly the relationally and sexually broken. She resides in Winnipeg, with her husband Kenny and their two Cornish Rex cats. Her ministry experience includes street ministry to sex trade workers, the homeless, prison ministry, dramatic arts and mentoring women. Her newest passion is learning American Sign Language, which she thoroughly enjoys.



Texting more and talking

Who would have thought we would one day live in a world in which toting around "portals of availability" would be as common as carrying a handkerchief in our pocket during the Great Depression?

Not me, that is for sure.

At the same time, I continue to appreciate the wondrous nature of our ever growing technological marvels. Especially, several years ago when three of our children worked abroad (Japan, Thailand and Hawaii), and my spouse and I were able to connect with them at the drop of the keyboard – "send."

Nor does it trouble me when young people texted their friends during a recent school choir festival while also excusing themselves from the auditorium several times during the performance to catch a cell call in the foyer. Most often during those times, I am just thankful I am not in their uncertain and dramatic "the sky is falling" stage of life.

Depleting our intuitions?

Yet, lately, I cannot help but wonder at our seemingly unending need to stay connected to others no matter what we are doing at the moment. I mean, do we really need to talk to someone as we are driving the car, crossing the street, going up the escalator or walking the dog? And the same goes for email or Facebook. Do we really need all this detailed information about them and us?

Or more specifically, do the "portals of availability" help us interact in a more effective way with others? Not necessarily, writes Catherine Blyth author of *The Art of Conversation*. She seems to believe that while these tools may bring us together, they equally keep us apart, not least from the here and now. She writes, "as distractions multiply, fewer receive our full



attention, and nuances are neglected." She stresses that text does not necessarily communicate tone. Furthermore, we are often not aware of the mood of the people reading our emails – and it is the tone that gives words much of their meaning. She also believes the Internet depletes our intuition – a skill that is honed through conversation: by texting more and talking less, we lose the ability to read each other.

In praise of good friends

For myself, I truly enjoy the advantages email brings, especially in terms of regular contact with those I care about (as well as hearing from various readers every now and then). But I discipline myself and most often attend to my mail only in the morning and the evening for a certain amount of time.

For the rest of the day, I am busy with activities that keep my life moving forward. Yet, I appreciate every new message in my box from good friends who will sometimes ask, "Did you read the article on page 7 of the *Saturday Review*? Let's talk about it next time we have coffee at Starbucks or lunch at the Quay!" And so, we will arrange to get together and talk and talk so we all feel heard and understood in a way that helps us see or tackle life in a new way.

In other words, let's be honest – good conversations can be music to our ears! Its harmony and rhythms flow through our minds and hearts as we become witnesses to one another's joys and sorrows, fears and pains – everything that makes our journey through life wondrously human. So, let's pass the handkerchief for times like this while appreciating the texting and emails for stimulating these memorable moments.

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

Work

Papal encyclicals and work

Bert den Boggende

Part II of II (See February 23 issue p. 11)

Pius XI

Forty years later, in 1931, pope Pius XI issued *Quadragesimo anno*, a much larger encyclical than *Rerum novarum*. Instead of addressing the working conditions as Leo XIII had done, Pius focused on the ethical implications of the socio-economic order. Many of its 148 paragraphs defend, explain, and show the practical results of *Rerum novarum*. However, since Leo's time new problems had become evident, notably in the increase of industrialization effecting the whole of society, especially in the increase into opposing social classes. (§38-40) Since this encyclical repeats so much of *Rerum novarum*, only a few statements will be highlighted. Since the economic and moral orders are not completely distinct, (§42) "there resides in Us [the pope] the right and duty to pronounce with supreme authority upon social and economic matters." (§41) While defending the right to property, Pius rejected the notion that therefore it sided with the wealthy against the working classes. (§44) He strongly rejected both individualism and collectivism. (§46) "Strikes and lock-outs are forbidden; if the parties cannot settle their dispute, public authority intervenes." (§94) Mothers should primarily work in the home or in its immediate vicinity. (§71) "Free competition has destroyed itself; economic dictatorship has supplanted the free market." (§109) Unrestrained capitalism and totalitarian communism are threats to human freedom and dignity. (§99-109) While there is an outright condemnation of communism, (§112) understandable in the light of what was happening in Stalin's USSR, socialism is viewed slightly more sympathetically. Even so, moderate socialism could and should but still hadn't entirely rejected the class struggle and the abolition of private ownership. (§113) Ultimately Pius concluded that "Religious socialism and Christian socialism are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist." (§120) Even so, the government has the right to redistribution policies, including expropriation. (§114-115)

According to Catholic scholar Gregory Baum, both popes critiqued the modern industrial society from an ideal past, which didn't correspond to any actual historical movement. He suggested that Catholic teaching was idealistic. While that was true, I think that Baum's critique was incomplete: he should have added "prophetic" as well. Baum was certainly correct in pointing out Pius' ambiguity concerning capitalism. Pius condemned the "immense power and despotic economic domination [that] are concentrated in the hands of a few" and complained that the "whole economic life has become hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly measure." Nevertheless, he also

stated that "capitalism as such is not to be condemned" and that "the system is not vicious by its very nature." (§104-109)

It is perhaps no surprise that with such ambiguity the encyclical had an ambiguous reception. Baum perceptively observed that "Catholic groups tended to read this teaching in ways that corresponded to their own material interests. The successful classes made much of the papal defence of private property, the condemnation of socialism, the repudiation of the class struggle and the summons to greater personal morality, while the workers and critics of society lauded in papal teaching the unmasking of industrial capitalism as the source of special injustices, the recognition of the exploitation of the proletariat, the approval of labour unions, the subordination of personal wealth and the production of goods to the promotion of the common good, and the duty of government to protect the poor and foster the well-being of the whole society." (p.80) Space prevents me from comparing Quebec with the rest of Canada, the United States or Britain or even the Netherlands. I can only say that the reactions differed.

Since 1931

Since *Quadragesimo anno* several papal statements have appeared. In *Pacem in terris*, 1963, pope John XXIII affirmed the inviolability of human rights. In 1965, with the Catholic hierarchy gathered in Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* noted that there was a new sense of service by the church in a rapidly changing world. Two years later, pope Paul VI, in *Populorum progressio*, called attention to the worsening marginalization of the poor. In 1971 the synod of bishops, in *Iustitia in mondo*, noted that the structural roots of injustice were afflicting human relations.

In 1971, on the 80th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Octogesima adveniens*. Pope Leo's encyclical remained again the basis, yet in the light of Vatican II there were some intriguing changes. It looked at some new social problems, such as urbanization, youth in urban settings, the new roles of women, the right to emigrate, the media. It also took a fresh look at ideologies. Moreover, the encyclical was much more careful to differentiate what was happening where. While the "grave problems of our time" were "common to all mankind," they were "different in each part of the world." Consequently, in the face of such great diversity it was difficult "to put forward a solution which has universal validity." (§2,4) While at times there were still strong papal condemnations – one "cannot adhere to Marxist ideology, to its atheistic materialism, to its dialectic of violence and to the way it absorbs individual freedom in the collectivity, at the same time denying all transcendence to man and his personal and collective history" (§26) – the pope also called for persona; discernment. (§36) For instance,

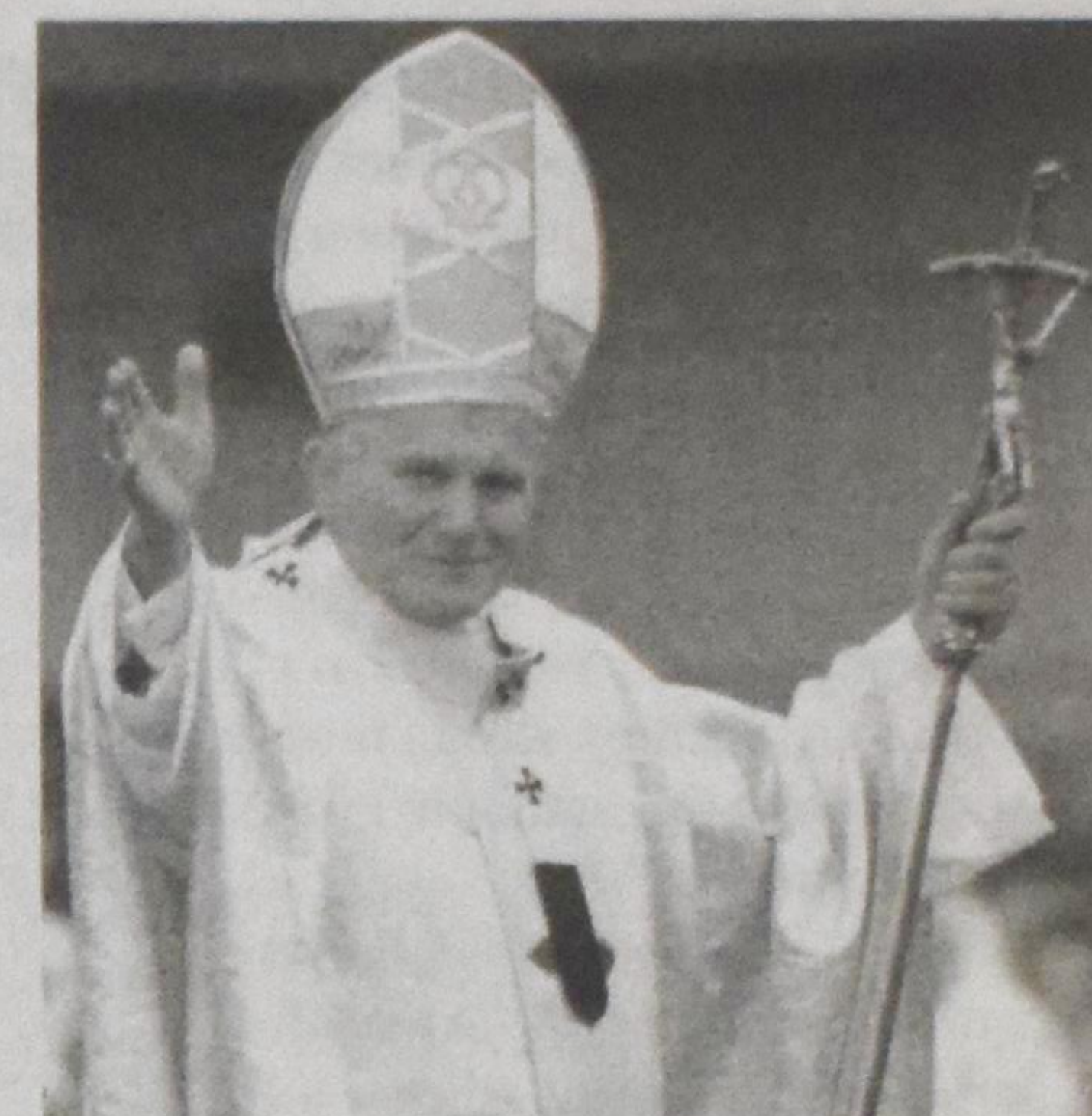
he not only condemned a liberal ideology exalting individual freedom (that in itself was already a softening of *Syllabus errorum*), but acknowledged that "some Christians [were] attracted to socialist currents and their various developments," and that "socialism [had] different forms in different continents and cultures." Therefore, "careful judgment [was] called for" and that "distinctions must be made to guide concrete choices between the various levels of expression of socialism." (§31) As long as a socialist party did not identify with a materialistic ideology, Catholics were now allowed to be members of such a party. How different from Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius XI!

And the difference was not only in regard to ideologies, but was also evident in a "dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of good will." (§4) This new cooperation was needed because the situation was urgent and called for solidarity: "A renewed consciousness of the demands of the Gospel makes it the Church's duty to put herself at the service of all, to help them grasp their serious problem in all its dimensions, and to convince them that solidarity in action at this turning point in history is a matter of urgency." (§5)

This urgency manifested itself in new loneliness, in anonymous crowds, in new proletariats born in the new megalopolises, in the new poor, such as the handicapped, dehumanizing living conditions, in becoming slaves of man-made objects, in the precarious situation of emigrant workers, and in the deterioration of the environment. To counter these new problems pope Paul VI posited that "Every man has the right to work, to a chance to develop his qualities and his personality in the exercise of his profession, to equitable remuneration which will enable him and his family to lead a worthy life on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level and to assistance in case of need arising from sickness or age." (§14) In addition, he called for the creation of employment (§18), for greater justice in the sharing of goods, for a revision of relationships between nations, "whether it is a question of the international division of production, the structure of exchanges, the control of profits, [or] the monetary system," (§43) and for a change of attitudes and structures. (§45) In fact, he questioned the very model of society. Desiring to awaken the people of God (§51-52), he called them to action (§48), noting that they had a pluralism of options (§50) and that they had a responsibility. (§11)

The Catholic Catechism

In 1981 pope John Paul II, in *Laborum exercens* (on human work), reinforced pope Paul VI's arguments, exhorting Christians everywhere to be involved in the transformation of the existing socio-economic systems. The meaning of work could only be properly understood, he



argued, when the dignity of labour was taken as an underlying premise. There have been other encyclicals, including *Centesimus annus*, in 1991, on the 100th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, but I will end with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, and the seventh commandment, "You shall not steal." (items 2401-2463) Number 2424 reads, "A theory that makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. The disordered desire for money cannot but produce perverse effects." Number 2426 states that "Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole man, and of the entire human community." According to 2439, "Rich nations have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic historical events. It is a duty in solidarity and charity." *Direct aid*, according to 2440, is an appropriate but not sufficient response. Rather, "It is also necessary to reform international economic and financial institutions so that they will promote equitable relationships with less advanced countries." Finally, 2452 observes that "The goods of creation are destined for the entire human race. The right to private property does not abolish the universal destination of goods." (Italics are in the original). From private property to private property, from 1864 to 1994, but what a change!

All encyclicals can be found on the internet.

Gregory Baum, *Catholics and Canadian Socialism: Political Thought in the Thirties and Forties* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1980): ch.2 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, Vol. 1, *The 19th Century in Europe* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969): p.457.

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Corinthians

The dead are as seed in the field

But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"

How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

I Cor. 15:35-38

A.A. VanRuler

Only now Paul begins to argue with those people in Corinth who deny the resurrection. First he has posited the facts: the facts of Christ's resurrection and his appearances to his eyewitnesses. After that, he has shown, from all different angles, how profoundly important these facts are for mankind's faith and life. Only now does he take on the counter-arguments offered by reason as it pertains to the thought and imaginableness of the resurrection of those who are dead.

Typically for the apostles, they put the things in this particular order. An apostle is not a philosopher: he starts with hard reality in his bringing of the gospel. After that, one can still do a bit of reasoning.

However, let's not forget about that last part. We must not lock ourselves so simply in the declaration of the gospel that we kill off all reasonable objections. That would not be particularly gracious. Besides preaching, there must be reasoning and conversation.

Foolishness

Still, Paul approaches his fellow debaters here rather forcefully. To the people who have some trouble imagining the resurrection and who wonder how all that is possible he says *You fool!*

There is foolishness in the reasonable objections to the Christian gospel. It is not so that foolishness is to be found only in the gospel and only wisdom in the world. One can also turn this around. In that case the gospel is wisdom personified and the objections from the world are only grounded in sheer folly.

Paul says that the question is a foolish one, because you only have to look at one very common image. People sow seed into the earth all the time. That seed is subjected to rot and decomposition, but still people expect that the seed will germinate and that a plant will grow from it. Paul says it's pretty dumb not to have the same kind of natural-ness about the resurrection and leave up to God that which a person expects from nature as a matter of course. In full expectation of a harvest, God sows his people in death but pulls us right through death into eternal life.

Of course, this is only an image, borrowed from our temporary and present reality. But this reality apparently shows some characteristics of the future and eternal reality. In thinking just that, one gives evidence of trusting profoundly in the goodness of being. The world is a good source of imagery about God and his acts. Sometimes people even go so far as to say that all of created reality is only a shadow of, or an overture to the eternal glory. But I would be careful with that, because we know that the present reality is the actual one and the future reality its salvation.

Death is a means

When looking at the image of seed, Paul's first thought is that the seed *must* die in order to become a plant. Death is, therefore, no objection to the preaching of the resurrection; on the contrary, death is a condition. Resurrection is the answer to death. Therefore, death *must* happen. One can even say that death is God's way, God's *means* to resurrection.

Here, however, we must not forget that the solution to the problem that we ourselves experience lies beyond

death as well. One cannot emphasize that enough: the fact that death separates us humans from the solution to the human problem. And it is exactly for that reason that the Lord God's solution to our problem escapes us! Even our faith has no direct knowledge of it. Faith becomes *hope*. Faith in the resurrection becomes hope for the resurrection. That is why, in speaking about it, we must borrow imagery that is grounded in the present reality. They are mere images and cannot quite express what the future reality will be like; it will still be quite different. We cannot know exactly what it means when we confess our faith in the resurrection and in life eternal. Such is the character of the matter at hand. The only way of speaking about it is in images and not in logical reasoning.

God gives new form

A second element Paul discusses when using this image is in his pointing to God's act. In the whole business of seeds rotting in the ground the sower surrenders it to death, but it is God who gives a new body to it. Every blade of grass awakening in spring shows God's creative power and act.

It is just like this in the resurrection. A person can only surrender herself to death. She herself is then the seed that is being sown. But God does something with that person in death: he saves her and raises her and gives a new body. This means that he gives her herself, because our body, that is [an essential part of] our real self.

This needs the power of God. The resurrection is not simply a development and unfolding of what exists; it is God's act, even as the unfolding of this creation into a new one is not simply undercover now, but rests in God's power and omnipresence. We, living from one moment to

the other, must put our hope permanently in God, in what he will do and when we die, we must do that completely. But in the resurrection of Christ he has shown that he is working still.

The complexity of unity

In the third place Paul's image of the seed shows the complexity of unity coupled to distinction, and of similarity coupled to contrast.

We do not sow a plant; we only sow a seed. In the same way, there will be a profound difference between people now and in the resurrection. Our rising from the dead does not mean that we *return* out of death. We walk *through* death and rise beyond to eternal life.

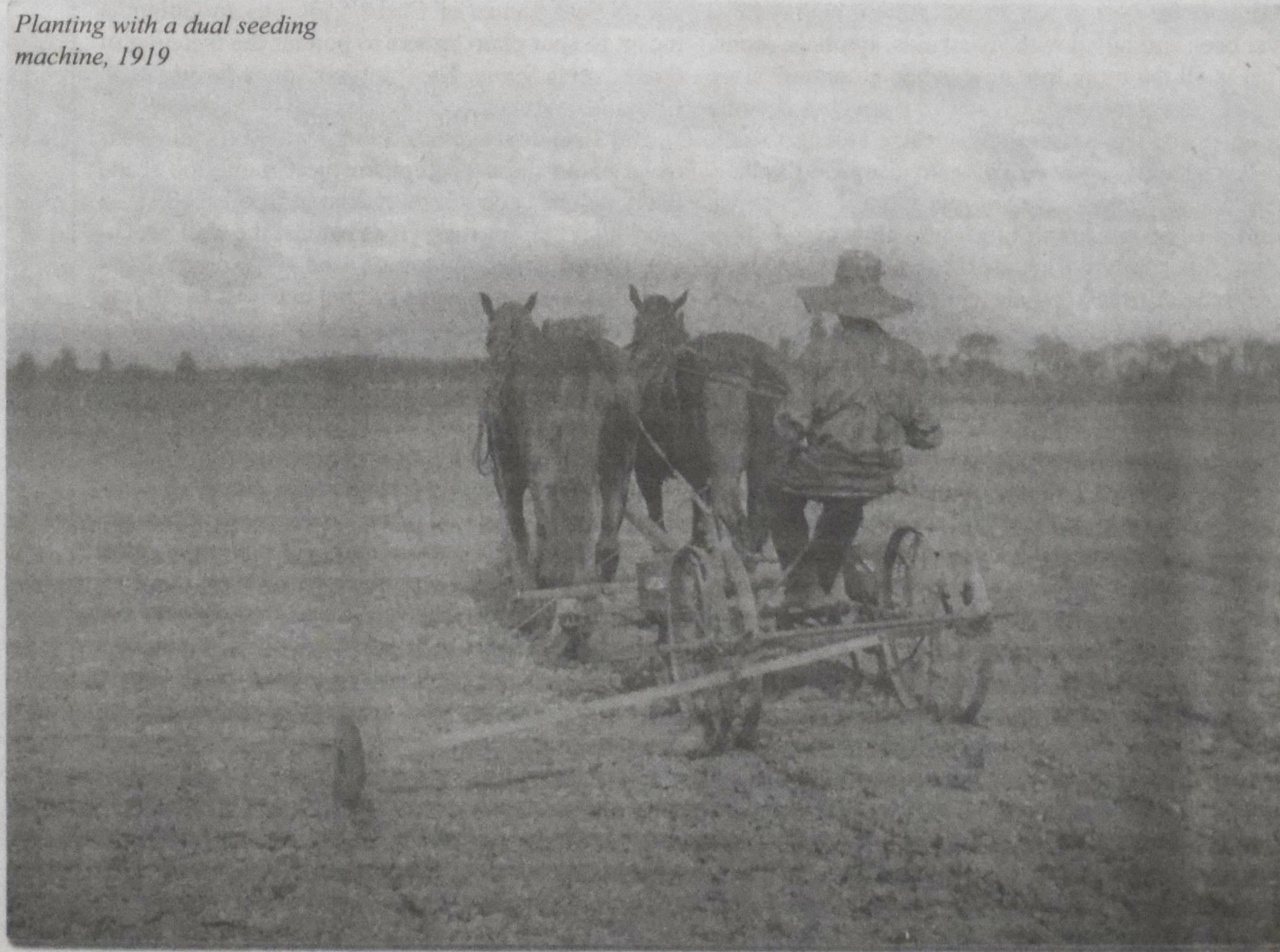
And yet we are not *purely* a new creation. There is a connection between the seed and the plant. If such were not the case, the whole business would be moot. Then, to say the least, the resurrection would not be a real *deliverance*. It is *I* who will rise from the dead and *I* will continue to be *me*.

Who am I really? Can I distinguish myself from my bodily and temporal existence? Am I something different from what I and others see of me and what I do and experience among other people? Must all of this not, in one way or other, come along with me through death?

As he has willed at creation, God gives the seed a body, and to each seed its own. That body does not only *belong* to that seed; it *suits* that particular seed. Everything here is dependent on God's might, on the creating newness of his deeds and on his faithfulness – his faithfulness to everything he has ever said and done. Even now am I, in my physical and temporal body, a word and an act of God. And he is everlastingly faithful to that, as he will show in my created newness. For that reason the resurrection is physical, is *bodily*. If it is not in the *body*, it is not a real resurrection, but a *feint*.

Translated by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines.

Planting with a dual seeding machine, 1919



Reflections

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

Behold! the Lamb of God

I used to think Lent was a dreary time. I've changed my mind.

The Lenten season encompasses the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Holy Week. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, moves to Maundy Thursday and culminates in Good Friday. Some of you may be skeptical of paying much attention to those days. We're *Easter* people, after all. We focus on Christ's resurrection. All those "holy days" may still strike you as so much extra-biblical *stuff* that distracts from our risen LORD himself.

Beware symbols becoming idols

Having had parents and other forebears who were staunchly Reformed, I grew up with those misgivings. We have a knack for inventing things that pull us away from our Creator-Redeemer, even sometimes when we think we're moving toward him.

The Israelites practiced God-given rituals. But when they asked Aaron to make them a golden calf to worship (while Moses was too-long stranded on that fearsome mountain), were they saying to themselves: *God did amazing things to get us out of Egypt, but now let's forget about him; let's worship this shiny calf and never look back?* I suspect not. I surmise that what they did say might have been: *God hasn't shown us any miracles lately; he's silent, he's distant; he's up there in the smoke with Moses, and in fact we're not entirely sure that Moses, or God, are even there any longer. Let's ask Aaron our priest — our mediator — to make a lovely expensive calf of gold to represent God, so that we can worship him more tangibly. We need to see him!*

Whether the Israelites saw that calf as a picture-symbol of God himself or as a pagan god to replace their covenant God, creating that impressively wrought metallic bovine visual aid was still dead wrong. God created a world full of marvelous color and texture, and gave us eyes to see it. We human beings have ever been enthralled with visual aids, symbols, icons. That is all the more true now, when communicating in pictures (graphics, we now call them) has become an obsession. But obsessions become idols.

The Israelites allowed a *thing* to usurp God's place. Included in "things" are not just statues — which we Reformed people aren't much into anyway — but relationships, children, spouses, friends, jobs, hobbies, celebrations, rituals (public, church-based or private). Any good thing and any relationship can become an idol if we let it. But if our hearts remain right we will never become idolaters.

God communicates in symbols

Over the years I've experienced that tangible observances during Lent are helpful to keep my focus on Christ and the depth of his love. Lent is a penitential season which forces me, alone and with fellow Christians, to enumerate my sins, to consider the depths of our Savior's suffering for our sakes.

Our lives are full of symbols. If you have a computer, they're all over your desktop. A bumper sticker bearing the *Ichthus* fish may announce our faith. A cross around your neck may let others know whose you are. So does a crucifix. I used to dislike them strongly, but now I realize they are harder to trivialize than an empty cross is.

Symbols and icons are little signs or pictures that stand for things bigger, often immensely bigger, than themselves. No book is more full of profound symbols

than the Bible is. It makes sense that our worship of the God of the Bible, who is God of the universe, is full of symbols — perhaps more full than we Reformed folks realize (our faith genes having grown out of words, not pictures). God is unfathomable and indescribable in human language. So he refers to himself with iconic names and in symbols that echo deep meanings for us: the Cross; Lamb of God; Lion of Judah; I AM, and many others.

The Cross is history's supreme God-directed irony: that the Roman Empire's instrument of hideous torture should have become *the* symbol of humankind's means of freedom, triumph and glory. Christ as Lamb of God is nearly as well known to non-Christians. Many grocery stores still sell lamb-shaped butters at Easter, icons of Christ. In the traditional icon, the Lamb stands or lies, holding an unfurled battle banner between a crooked front leg. On the banner is the cross, which speaks for itself. In other depictions the banner proclaims, *Ecce agnus dei*: "Behold! the Lamb of God."

An unexpected joy

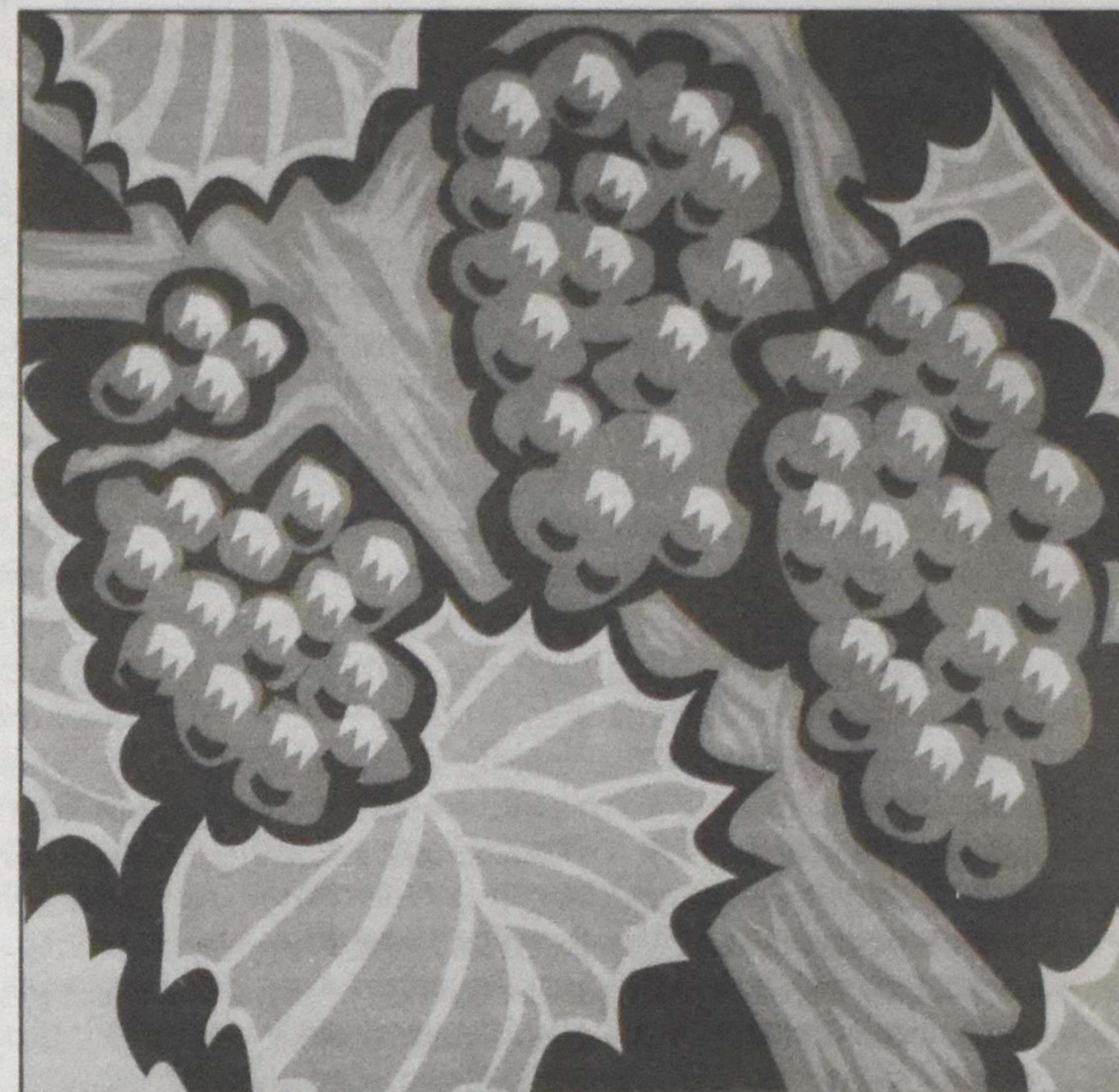
I was thinking of these things the other night during a performance of Bach's monumental *Mass in B Minor*. (I was in the chorus but had time to think when the soloists sang.) Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a devout Lutheran whose faith was the center of his life as a composer, organist, husband and father. It bolstered him through his daily composing, through working with uncomprehending church consistories, and through the deaths of his first wife, then the second, and 10 of his 20 children. He understood suffering and joy.

Facing the audience, we in the chorus could see the whole sanctuary. Attached to the walls between the windows above head level, in three-dimensional sculptures, are the 14 "stations of the cross." These are biblical scenes of Christ's journey to Golgotha meant to spur churchgoers to ponder the meaning of those events for us. The "stations" are a fixture in all Catholic churches.

But I suddenly realized there was something unusual about these. Except for the Crucifixion scene itself, behind each sculpture a large wooden cross — a gloriously *empty* cross — rose against the wall, reaching to well above the top of each sculpture. What a magnificent simultaneous symbol of Christ's suffering and his exaltation!

Just then the music coincided perfectly. In the music we confessed with the creed, "He died and was buried" (*Passus et sepultus est*). The musical line drops down, down, sinking into a stricken near-whisper. Christ's abandonment is aurally graphic, stark. But Bach knew that that is not the end of the story. We assert: "And on the third day he rose again!" (*Et resurrexit tertia die*). The melody and harmonies leap upward together, trumpets call, kettle drums roll, the tempo dances, the rhythm imitates hearts pounding with excitement. A more exhilarating contrast can hardly be imagined, nor a better way to spend a Lenten evening.

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@roadrunner.com or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com



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Review / Advertising

Fiddler on the Roof



and ultimately relatable. Johnson, as Golde, was endearingly patient, credulous, and affectionate, with a veneer of overbearing crustiness. The audiences who were blessed to see one of the performances will not soon forget the beautiful, well-choreographed musical numbers, the 'dream' which Tevey tells his wife, or the sad-sweet longing feeling brought on by this play about community, change, and the passing of time.

In theatre, there are a few elements which no one notices unless they are badly done; these were all well-done in this production: the lighting provided subtle changes in mood and,

with creative scene-changes, was used to transition easily from one location to another. The set, interesting without being distracting, created the feeling of a small, historic, working class town. The costumes, hair and make-up helped to set the play in the Jewish-Russian community in Anatevka, and created connection (or division) between the different groups of characters. The orchestra, positioned behind the set, played so well that the play was half over before some people realized it was live music they were hearing.

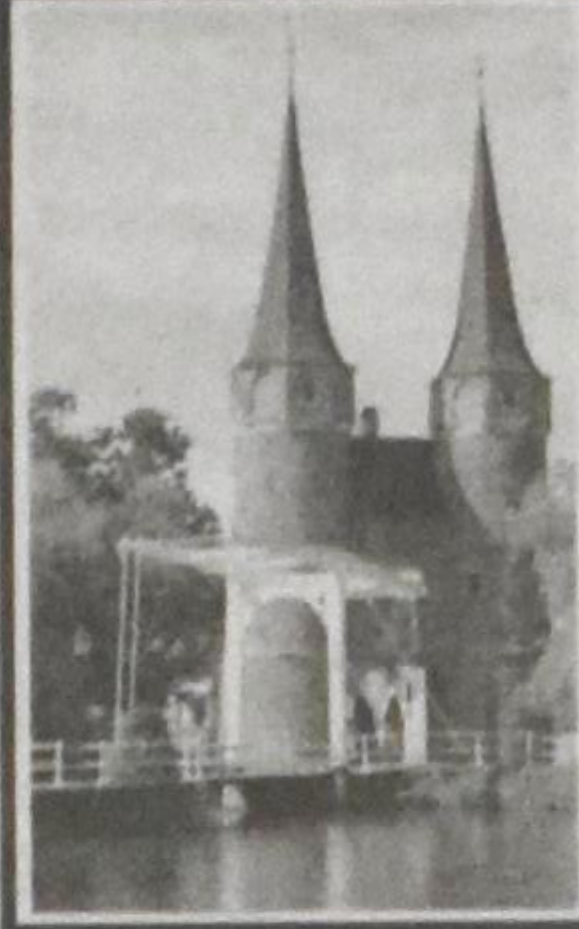
In any show, there were things that could have been improved upon. For those unfamiliar with Russian history and the story of *Fiddler on the Roof*, some explanation in the program of the setting and surrounding circumstances may have been helpful. The soldiers and police may have been more threatening if they had all been played by men, but that is always a difficulty for small theatre companies.

Overall, the play was engaging, memorable, and touching. The cast, crew, orchestra, director, and producer can be very proud of having been part of this production, Redeemer's first large-scale musical.

A review by **Anita Brinkman**

From February 3 to 7, community was celebrated in a special way at Redeemer University College, with a production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. It was sort of a triple-layering of community, as *Fiddler* is a play that, in its essence, is about community; any production in theatre always demands the varied skills of a collection of people who quickly become community; and the whole extended Redeemer community turned out to support this great endeavour by watching the performances.

The performances were well-worth watching. The amount of time and effort given to this production was evident in the paradoxical way of theatre: it was impossible to notice because the show was so engaging that no one was thinking about the time it must have taken to prepare it. The well-cast show included students, faculty, and alumni of Redeemer. All of them had lovely singing voices, and the show was well-acted. The few missteps or dropped lines only served to show us that the actors, like the characters, are human and fallible after all. It is difficult to give special mention to any actor in a seamless production like this one, but it would be unfair not to take note of the talents of Doug Loney and Joy Johnson, who played Tevey and his wife Golde. Loney, as Tevey, displayed a nice blend of subtlety and pomposity while remaining warm, likeable,



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Wedding	Birthdays	Anniversaries	Obituaries
<p>George & Ada Struyk (Cochrane) John & Ellen Hessels (Brampton)</p> <p>With thanks to our faithful God, we joyfully announce the upcoming wedding of our children:</p> <p>Aileen and Greg</p> <p>On March 28, 2009 (DV) in Milton.</p> <p>Mailing address: Greg & Aileen Hessels Box 54, Cochrane ON P0L 1C0</p>	<p>Maasdijk Lacombe 1929 APRIL 17 2009</p> <p>Joanne Van Gyssel (Van Nieuwkerk) has been blessed by the Lord with 80 Years. Her children Janet & Norman, Barb & Rod, Hilda & Ron, John & Dana, Cora & Pete and 21 grandchildren will celebrate this milestone of God's grace with her. Her address: 403 - 5102 48 Street Lacombe AB T4L 2J4</p>	<p>1959 April 3 2009 Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him. Psalm 37:5</p> <p>With thankfulness to the Lord we hope to celebrate the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p> <p>DAVE AND ANN KONING (nee Branderhorst)</p> <p>We praise God for his faithfulness and love shown to you in the past and pray that God will continue to bless you in the years ahead.</p> <p>Love and congratulations from: John & Wanda Koning of Mount Hope, ON Becky & Mike (John), Jennifer, Ben, Jake Don & Linda Koning of Troy, ON Darryl, Jason, Kevin Rob & Nancy Koning of Troy, ON Michael, Melissa, Matthew Jeff & Lorie Koning of Mount Hope, ON Evan, MacKenzie, Leah Steve & Sara Koning of Troy, ON Calvin, Austin, Jillian, Abigail</p> <p>Open House: Saturday, April 4th, 2009, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Mount Hamilton Christian Reformed Church, Hamilton Best wishes only please.</p> <p>Home address: 31 Postoaks Dr, Mount Hope ON L0R 1W0</p>	<p><i>But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him. And his righteousness with their children's children. With those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. Psalm 103:17&18</i></p> <p>August 6, 1934 – February 27, 2009</p> <p>PHILLEPINA HENDRIKA MARIA (Heidi) MEIJAARD (nee Muys) was called Home by her heavenly Father in her 75th year. Faithful and devoted wife of Gerry Meijaard for 51 years. Loving mother & Oma to Tyler & Alma Meijaard, Jordan Station, ON Michael (Bethany), Melissa, Christina (Edward), Scott, Adam Home address: 3260 New Street, Burlington ON L7N 3L4</p>
<p>Personals</p> <p>I am a single woman in my late 30's living north of Toronto. I am hoping to meet a single man for companionship, adventure, and romance. Reply to File #2765 c/o Christian Courier 5 Joanna Dr St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1</p>	 <p>Helen Hiemstra, nee Romkes (Weverink) will celebrate her 90th Birthday on March 31st, 2009. Congratulations Mom from Thea (Ed) Broer, Tena (Ron) Dykxhoorn, and Leo (Yvonne) Weverink and your many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Our prayer for you is God's continued blessings and another two year extension of your drivers licence! Way to go Mom. Please forward best wishes to 11-110 Caverly Rd, Aylmer ON N5H 2P4</p>	<p>1959, March 12 2009 Trenton, Ontario</p> <p>Blessings from Above</p> 	<p>1925 2009 <i>The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms. Deuteronomy 33:27</i></p> <p>HAROLD RADERSMA Promoted to Glory! The Lord has called Harold to His eternal home, on Sunday, March 1, 2009 in his 84th year. Beloved husband of: Tina (nee Stienstra) for 58 years. Loving and caring father of: Tollina & Frank deWaard Renee & Pardo Vulcano Harry & Juli Radersma Joyce & Jim Buisman Wilma & Gerry Chiasson Jim & Laurie Radersma Proud grandfather of 15 grandchildren and happy Opa of 5 great-grandchildren. Predeceased by two infant grandchildren. Loved brother of: Douglas and Willy of Keswick and Gertrude, Alice and Bryan of Holland. A service of Remembrance was held Wednesday, March 4, 2009, at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church, Pastor David Tigchelaar officiated. Corresponding address: Tina Radersma 321 – 275 Main Street East, Grimsby ON L3M 5N8</p>
<p>For Rent</p> <p>STUDENT RENTAL – St. Catharines, Ont. Clean, well maintained student house in quiet residential area, close to all amenities. On bus route to Brock University. Looking for male students. All inclusive \$400 per month. Call 905 945 4241</p>	<p>House for Rent – 3 bedroom + den, 1-1/2 storey centrally located to London, Woodstock, Tillsonburg, and St. Thomas. \$750.00 per month plus utilities. Phone No.: 519-269-3939</p>	<p>50th Wedding Anniversary of HILBERT AND DORA DEBOER (nee Hoftyzer)</p> <p>Alida DeBoer, Toronto ON Suileman Muse (friend) Arlene & Kirby Hakkesteeft, Brighton ON Kevin & Lisa, Edmonton, AB Bryce & Dana Mick (fiance) Julie Angela Adrian & Frances DeBoer, Palmerston, ON Eric Nicole John & Jody DeBoer, Toronto, ON Sandra & Paul Heerema, Beamsville ON Shawn Darren Renee</p> <p>Lord willing, the celebration will take place with family on April 18, 2009.</p> <p>Home address: 9 Edgeview Drive, Trenton ON K8V 3G4</p>	<p>Diever, Drente Acton, Ontario November 24, 1931 March 10, 2009</p> <p><i>You have laid your hand upon me. Psalm 139:5b</i></p> <p>MINA REINDERS (nee Hessels) went to be with her Lord and Saviour. Lovingly remembered by her brothers and sisters: Mart Hessels, Diever, Drente Tim & Anna Hessels, Wellandport, Ontario Roelof & Jantje Biel, Westerbork, Drente Hans & Fygje Hessels, Diever, Drente Kor & Ann Oudman, St. Thomas, Ontario</p>
<p>Vacation</p> <p>Holiday in Holland Beautiful self-contained cottage in Friesland www.chestnutlane.nl</p>	<p>CALL FOR VISUAL ARTISTS</p> <p>BORDERS across borders ART EXHIBITION JUNE 3 - 5 '09</p> <p>ACROSS BORDERS an international conference featuring Dutch-Canadian and Dutch-American history and culture, to be held on June 3-5, 2009 at Redeemer University College, invites submissions for an art exhibition. Media: All Location: Ancaster, Ontario Deadline: April 15, 2009 Open to artists of Dutch heritage</p> <p>For more details please contact Petra Zantingh pzantingh@redeemer.ca 905.648.2131</p>	<p>Canada/ Netherlands Friendship Day</p> <p>May 2 Flag raising ceremony 12 noon at Burlington City Hall, music and anthems by the "Ambassadors". May 4 Celebrations continue at the Royal Botanical Gardens. See Calendar of Events for details.</p>	<p>JANNIGJE (JANE) DELANGE (nee Windhorst) July 1922 – March 2009</p> <p>In both sadness and hope, the family of Jane DeLange wish to tell her friends and community that our mother, oma and great-oma has been welcomed into heaven. We, her family, are grateful for her wisdom, "nuchterheid", sense of adven- ture, active participation in all our lives and especially for the model she was to us of faithful Christian living.</p> <p>Mom was predeceased in death by her loving husband and our dad, Theo (Ted) DeLange (1982). With gratitude to God for his blessings, we invite you to mourn with us her passing and to celebrate her life. Mom's funeral was held in Brantford on March 3, 2009. (www.hillandrobinson.com)</p> <p>Children: Abe & Jackie DeLange Henny DeLange & Jerry Reitsma Sonja & Ralph Merritt Thea & Art deGroot Oma to: Jennifer deGroot & Will Braun Esther deGroot & Matt VanGeest Amaryah deGroot & Brett Woodman Matt & Zita Merritt Annette & Rod Mitchell Jessa Reitsma Elek Reitsma Katie & Scott Reid Abbey DeLange Great-oma to: Hannah, Tamara, Noble, Emma, Brenna, Gabriela, Eily, Zavi, & Kayne. Condolences and memories may be forwarded to Henny DeLange, 22 Highcroft, Toronto ON M4L 3G2 or to theadegroot@sympatico.ca</p>
 <p>Grand Philharmonic Choir of Kitchener, Ontario under the direction of Howard Dyck, will be performing Bach's famous</p> <p>St. Matthew Passion "Good Friday" April 10 at 7:30, at the Centre in the Square, Kitchener, Ontario. For tickets call 519-578- 1570 or 1-800-265-8977. For any other information: Broer@csolve.net</p>	<p>The Royal Canadian College of Organists, Windsor and Chatham Centres present</p> <p>Dr. Jonathan Oldengarm, Concert Organist, March 29 at 4:00 p.m. at St. Andrew's United Church, 85 William St. South, Chatham, ON. Admission: \$12 Adults; \$10 seniors/ students.</p>		

Classifieds / Job Opportunities

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Please send inquiries to:

**Search Committee, Mountainview CRC,
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or email: searchcommittee@mountainviewcrc.org.

Further information may be obtained by visiting our website www.mountainviewcrc.org or contacting Annette Klingenberg, chair of Search Committee, at 905-563-5736 (evenings 7pm-10pm EST)

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A church profile is available. Please contact search committee chair Toby Smits at smitseng@eagle.ca or call (905) 349-3454 evenings or weekends.

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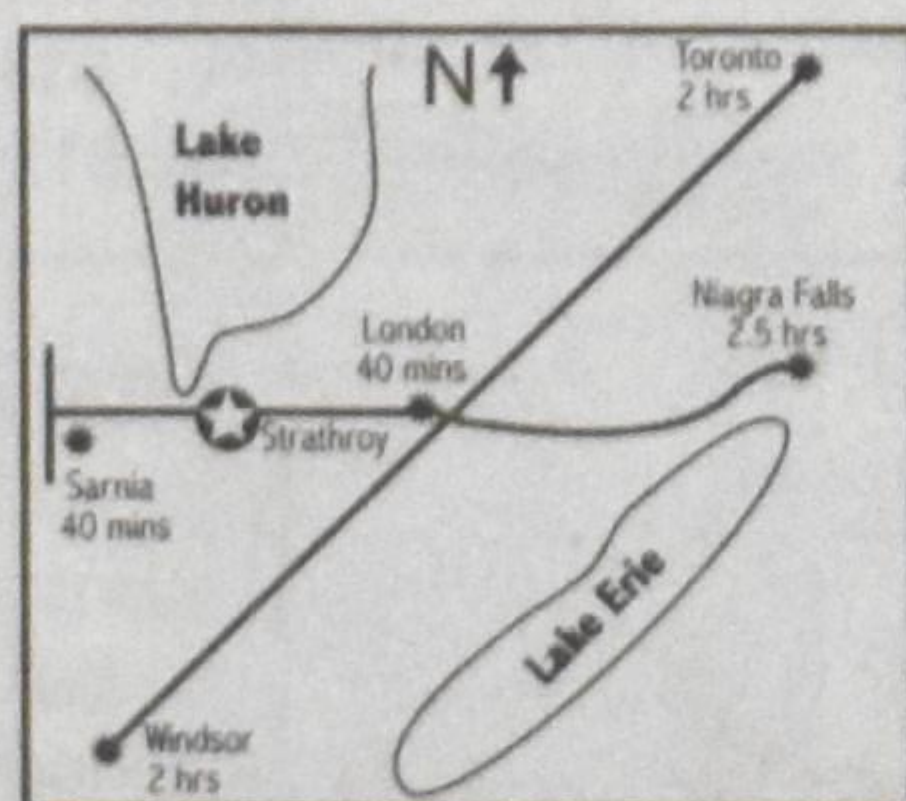
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For Sale — Igor the Acolyte

A review by Aaron Helleman

In Aren Geisterfer's *Igor the Acolyte*, an Indonesian-born Dutch boy (a synthesis of Geisterfer's early life experiences) barely survives his pre-adolescence during the terrible and tragic days of World War II.

Growing up in Malang, East Java, Igor is forever impacted by his relationship with Timah, his Indonesian nursemaid and one of his spiritual mentors and worldview shapers. His boyhood friends also deeply impact his life and relationships and shape his understanding of how the world is supposed to work. At the same time, Igor carries the strengths and burdens of his mother, a woman who holds a deeply-set faith rooted in Dutch tradition and the intensity of the Christian Reformed worldview. Her prophetic words start the reader on a journey, forcing us to ask, can we read the headlines and news of the world around us and learn to see God moving through them?

This unique heritage makes Igor uniquely able to examine and explore the radically shifting world of the crumbling Dutch empire in Indonesia as the Japanese take over his world. His East and West cultural perspectives ebb and flow throughout the book.

We see Igor's relationships with neighbours and friends torn apart as the war and the story unfolds through his young yet questioning eyes. Through

his action-packed, routinely terrifying and courage-building boyhood experiences and his internal reflections, we start to experience what faith and growth look like under the stress of war.

Geisterfer is brutally honest, open and graphic as he describes the social breakdown and systematic dehumanization of the Dutch in Indonesia during this time. It is difficult and painful to read, but history demands that we never forget how easily the evil that dwells within us all can rip our lives apart.

What is new and particularly gripping is how Geisterfer is able to explain to the reader how his mother's faith, his own razor-sharp intellect and his own evolving faith allow him to survive and yet cause him to ask impossible questions.

This book is not recommended for people looking for an easy read. It is a long and detailed account that is emotionally challenging, spiritually stretching and not recommended for sensitive readers. The language is coarse, sexual and blunt, but this book is as alive as anything I've read.

How to order

The book is 650 pages. Price \$49.00 excludes Can. postage

Email: arengeristerfer@sympatico.ca
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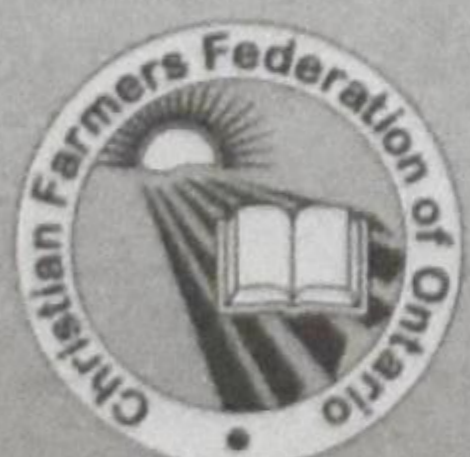
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Mar 27** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Eerlijk of Heerlijk" at Great Lakes Christian College in **Beamsville** on Friday at 8 p.m. Call 519 283 6285 for more information or see ad Feb 23 issue.
- Mar 29** The Royal Canadian College of Organists, Windsor and Chatham Centres present Dr. Jonathan Oldengarm, Concert Organist, 4:00 p.m. at St. Andrew's United Church, 85 William St. South, **Chatham, ON.**, Admission at the door: \$12 Adults; \$10 seniors/ students.
- Apr 3** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Eerlijk of Heerlijk" at the London Dutch Canadian Hall in **London** at 8 p.m. Call 519 283 6285 for more information. See ad Feb 23 issue.
- Apr 10** "Good Friday": Grand Philharmonic Choir of Kitchener, Ontario under the direction of Howard Dyck, will be performing Bach's famous St. Matthew Passion. Time 7:30, Place: Centre in the Square, Kitchener, Ontario. For tickets call 519-578-1570 or 1-800-265-8977. For any other information: Broer@csolve.net
- Apr 19** Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Herman Praamsma will be preaching.
- Apr 24-25** Marriage Encounter weekend, **London, ON.** For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_registration@reformedme.org
- May 2** Canada/Netherlands Friendship Day: flag raising ceremony 12 noon at Burlington City Hall, music and anthems by the "Ambassadors".
- May 4** Canada/Netherlands Friendship Day celebrations continue at the Royal Botanical Gardens. Doors open at 6 P.M. Program starts at 7 P.M, music by the "Liberation Choir", free admission. For more info visit www.cnfa.ca or contact Jack van der laan at 905 332 7000 or Hans Kloet at 905 336 718.
- May 23** Combined nine Male Choirs (over 300 voices) from Southwestern Ontario, will present D. V. a Festival of Praise Concert, singing all Sacred mass numbers, at the Centennial Hall, 555 Wellington Street, London, Ontario. Saturday, at time 7:30 p.m. Doors open 6:30 p.m. Tickets \$13.00 from all choir members and host Choir: St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo". For tickets and information please call: (519) 637-4357 or (519) 631-9245 No reserved seating.
- May 30** John Knox Christian School, **Brampton**, would like to invite former students & staff to our 50th Anniversary Celebrations. Golf Tournament 7:00 a.m., Open House 4-6 p.m. & dinner 6:30 p.m. See our website for details & registration information: www.bramptonjkcs.org or email us: [blessings@bramptonjkcs.org](mailto: blessings@bramptonjkcs.org) Please bring your JKCS memorabilia for the Open House.
- May 30,31** First CRC **Sarnia**, Ontario will be celebrating its 75th anniversary. A banquet will be held on Saturday night with special services held on Sunday. All friends and former members are certainly invited and welcome to join. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1crc75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808.

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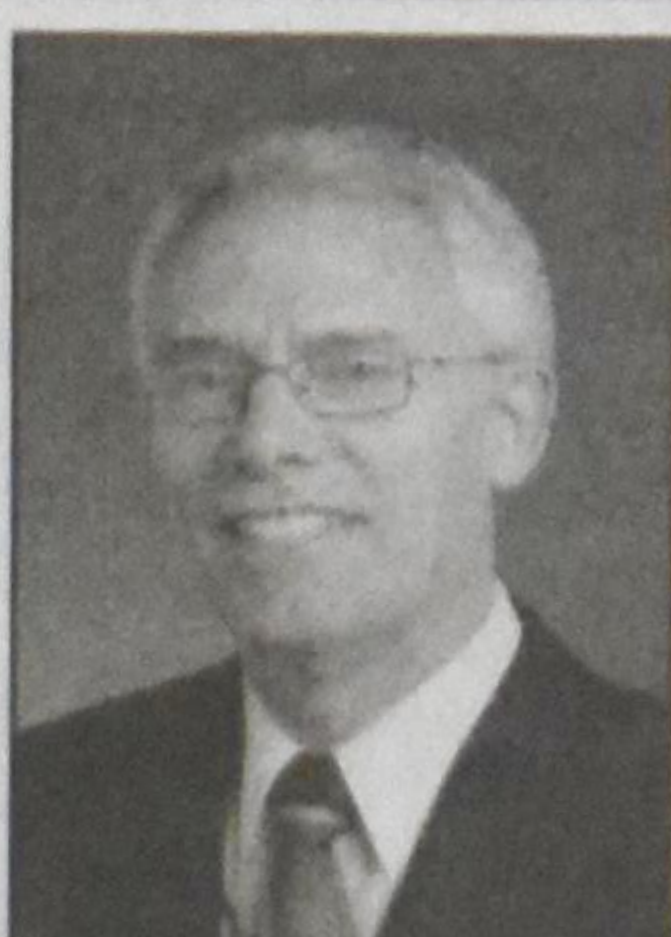
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News

Garbage turns into gold in Bangladesh

Organic waste becomes saleable compost

Lisa Schroeder(CSM)

Dhaka, Bangladesh – Maqsood Sinha and Iftekhar Enayetullah like to talk trash, but that’s because they’re pioneers in Bangladesh’s organic-waste recycling. They are the founders and directors of Waste Concern. Since 1995, this NGO has reduced the amount of urban garbage produced here, created jobs and healthier living environments for poor residents, provided for more sustainable farming, and cut down on greenhouse-gas emissions.

Bangladesh is one of the world’s poorest and most populous nations. Because it lacks space for landfills, trash disposal is a major concern. Every day 3,500 tons of garbage is produced in the city of Dhaka, says Mr. Sinha. Almost half of the city’s trash goes uncollected. Most of it is left on the streets or in open trash sites.

But 80 percent of the waste is organic – food waste, such as vegetable and fruit peels, meat scraps, and spoiled fish.

That’s where Sinha, an architect and urban planner, and Mr. Enayetullah, a civil engineer and urban planner, stepped in. After earning degrees abroad, they came back to turn organic trash into a profitable resource: compost.

One man’s trash...

First they concentrated on the areas most urgently affected by uncollected garbage – Dhaka’s slums. More than one-third of the city’s estimated 11 million people live in slums with no running water or sanitation, let alone trash disposal.

Here, Waste Concern developed community-based composting (CBC), in which residents put their food scraps into big composting barrels. The chest-high metal barrels sit on concrete bases and can hold up to 400 pounds of waste. Specially drilled holes encourage aerobic decomposition. The barrels are shared among three to seven families, and each family is held accountable for the barrel’s contents. They also share in the profits: 7 taka per kilogram (about



Residents of the Vasantek slum near Dhaka, Bangladesh, put food waste into large metal barrels.

5 cents per pound).

Barrel composting is extremely simple. People like Momtaz Begum simply sweep up their waste and dump it into the barrel. There is no need to do anything else, as the design takes care of all composting needs. “I’m very satisfied with the barrel-composting system,” she says. “Now it’s more clean and we’re safer from waste-borne diseases.”

After three to four months, the waste is collected and allowed to mature in a large shed for 10 to 15 days before it’s ready to be sold to local farmers.

Muhammad Babul Hossain, one of the slum’s three compost collectors, didn’t have a job before the barrel program began, but now he’s one of the slum’s high-income earners at 4,000 taka (\$58) per month.

Organic compost costs less than chemical fertilizer, and it has other benefits. It enriches the soil rather than depleting it the way chemical fertilizers can do. It sustains the farmland, proponents claim, “not only for this year, but for the years ahead,” says Zakir Hossain of research institute Krisoker Saar (Farmers’ Voice).

Sinha notes that the program is being replicated in 26 other cities in Bangladesh as well as in other developing nations.

Odds and Trends

City birds learn ‘urban rap’

Dutch researchers have found that urban-dwelling birds sing shorter, faster songs than their rural counterparts. Birds in the country still sing traditional melodies, whereas experts say that the city birds have adapted to counter background noise. “City birds also sing at a higher pitch and will try out different song types,” say University of Leiden researchers. No word yet on whether birds near churches have changed their style to reflect trends in contemporary worship.

One day in the life of Conrad Black

“I get up just after seven except on the weekends and holidays when it is possible to sleep in. I eat some granola and go to my workplace where I tutor high school-leaving candidates, one-on-one. I lunch around 11 with friends from education, work on e-mails, play the piano for 30 to 60 minutes, return to my tutoring tasks by 1, return to my unit at three, deal with more e-mails, rest from four to six, eat dinner in the unit then, and go for a walk in the compound or recreation yard for a couple of hours, drinking coffee well-made by Colombian fellow-residents, and come back into the residence about 8:30, deal with e-mails and read until 1-1:30 a.m. and go to sleep. On the weekends it is pretty open.”

Excerpted from an email Conrad Black sent to *National Post* reporter Theresa Tedesco. Black has just completed the first year of a six-year sentence for fraud. The ex-newspaper magnate still writes regularly for the *National Post*, a paper he began in 1998.

What to bring to a church potluck

Once the weather warms up, you’ll be invited to more church socials than there are kinds of Jello salad. Use this handy guide to decide what to bring to your next church potluck.

A salad should have three basic components: the mixture (broccoli, lettuce, apples, noodles or chocolate bars); the crunchy stuff (pine nuts, sunflower seeds, or tortilla chips); the dressing (traditional oil-based dressing, mayonnaise, or non-dairy whipped topping).

For the casserole, choose your protein by region: sausage or pheasant (East Coast); ground beef (Midwest); crawdad, catfish or Marlin (South); Moose meat or walleye (North); or tofu (West Coast).

Your dessert may be the most highly valued dish at the potluck, so bring a lot. It must include two key ingredients: flour and fudge. For example, residents of Sioux Centre, Iowa enjoy triple-fudge fudge with fudge sauce and a side of fudge served on a square of raspberry Jello.

Adapted with permission from *The Reformed Handbook*, put out by Faith Alive Christian Resources (2007). This book is available at faithaliveresources.org.

Angela Reitsma Bick

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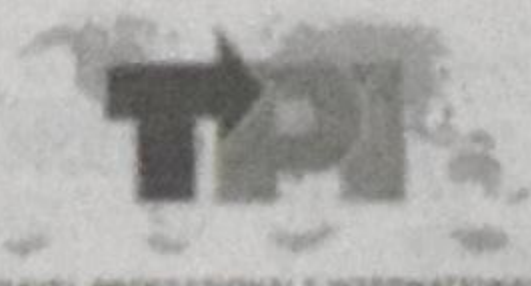
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